1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Evidently royal persons could then be easily distinguished from the commoners.

The question naturally arises how far may a similar distinction be observed at the present time. The genealogical tables presented may answer the question. It may be seen that intermarriage of commoners and royalty has proceeded to such a degree that the differences have been greatly dimmed, if not quite erased. Furthermore, the loss of the political power which the royal families formerly held has levelled down distinctions until they have largely lost their meaning. This loss again has hastened the process of intermarriage with commoners. While there are some distinctive practices which persist, they may now pertain to or be practised by certain members of a family only, or in some instances, and not in others. These refer especially to inheritance and to the naming of children.

By 'social structure' is meant the more or less permanent framework of relationships between members of a community which manifests itself in an ordered group-life, with reciprocal rights and duties, privileges and obligations, of members, determining behaviour-patterns . . . and moulding the feelings, thoughts, and conduct of members according to these patterns, so that it is only in and through them that the individual can achieve his personal self-realization and participate in the satisfactions offered by the life of his community.

This framework of social organization, or social structure, is permanent compared with the stream of human lives that, in the succession of the generations, flows through it. Each new generation finds it there, as an inheritance from untold generations of his predecessors. Yet the framework of social structure is not absolutely rigid or fixed for all time, but is itself a thing of growth, capable of variation in detail, sometimes giving birth to new developments, at other times undergoing disintegration and decay.[1]

The genealogical tables which I have collected are fairly representative of the major divisions or 'tribes' of the Ovimbundu. The only 'tribes' not represented are those of the border regions of Namba, Sanga, Cikomba, and Kalukembe, none of which save the last are numerically important. These border groups themselves offer an interesting field of study and particularly in that they may provide cultural and linguistic bridges between the Ovimbundu and their neighbors.

[1] A. W. Hoernlé in Schapera, *The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1937), p. 67 f.

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they recognize Sekulu Sikīlīlē, the elder of the largest unit, as the village headman. Only in his village is there a dancing floor (*ocīlā*),[1] which is the centre of village life, social, legal, and recreational. As the name indicates, it is first and foremost a place for recreation, but here also religious functions are held since they involve so much dancing and drinking, and here formal cases are tried. The *ocīlā* is the heart of the village.

The Men's Club-House. Ngendo does not have that other important Umbundu institution, the Men's Club House (*onjango*).[2] The *onjango* is, or was, hardly less important than the *ocīlā*. Perhaps before it fell to its present state of disuse, its place was of even greater importance, for in the *onjango* all the men, youths, and boys gathered day by day for the evening meal. From all the kitchens came baskets of stiff corn porridge (*iputa*), and dishes of relish (*ombelela*)[3] which all shared, from the most honoured guest or the village elders, down to the naked, ash-whitened little boys just old enough (say from seven or eight years) to leave the kitchens to their mothers and sisters. In the *onjango* guests were entertained, judicial cases of lesser import were settled, the day's work and gossip discussed, and youth was educated by precept and example in nearly everything from traditional history to etiquette. The *onjango* was dining-room, living-room, court, school, hotel, and club, all in one. For some of the Ovimbundu it continues to function. Upon inquiry I found that in all Kasonge there were hardly ten villages where the *onjango* existed and retained its former functions. The reasons which my informants assigned are that the demands for road work (in the immediate region), for contract labour (involving absences of from six months to two years), and the difficulty of securing tax-money, did not leave the leisure required for the common meal in the *onjango*. When I made wider inquiries as to localities where the *onjango* now exists and retains its former functions, it seems that this institution is widely decadent. According to my information, the regions where it continues to function are chiefly in Ngalangi, in Viye, and

[1] *Ocīlā* comes from the verb *oku cīlā*, to dance.

[2] *Onjango* has been traced to the verb *oku vangula*, to converse, but I am doubtful of this derivation. It has been called 'The Palaver House', but this is an evident misnomer, for the *onjango* is much more than that.

[3] *Ombelela* is a word to cover any dish which may be eaten with the porridge staple. It may be meat, beans, mushrooms, or greens, and is preferred with gravy into which pieces of the stiff porridge may be dipped (*oku miña*).

1: Childs M-S (1934-1940) 1949 FP 13Mbundu FP 13

perhaps in Ndulu. In Ngendo the Men's Club had taken over the rocks just behind the headman's household for its meeting-place, but the meetings were only occasional and there was no common meal.

The Village Plan

To speak of the plan of an Umbundu village may seem a contradiction in terms, so haphazard seems the relation of houses, gardens, &c., to each other. Some houses are circular, but the majority are more nearly rectangular in shape. There is a palisade of hardwood sticks surrounding all the village except that side of the headman's household which is adjacent to the rocks used for a club-house. The headman had not bothered to keep up his own part of the fence since his only garden was a small tobacco plot fenced in by itself. The village is itself divided up by the palisades which shut off one compound from another, each compound containing the houses of from one to three households. Between the palisades are paths which lead on to the dancing floor and out of the village. In the village of Sekulu Sikĭlĭlĕ there were twenty-five households with thirty-two houses in all. Each house (*onjo*) had its own granary (*onila*), and small chicken-coop built on stilts, and of all the houses only six had separate kitchens (*ociwo*). Nearly every household had separate pens for the pigs, goats, and sheep for the night. At one side of the headman's compound there was a common corral for the nine cattle which the villagers owned. Only the headman had a spirit-hut (*etambo*), used also for a storehouse, for entertaining a guest, and for his own bedroom should he sleep apart from his wives. Within the several compounds were small gardens of tobacco and of maize and beans, and just outside the village were two separate tobacco gardens. Just a few paces to the west was a small patch of wheat belonging to a man in the smallest ward. There was one household of two houses quite outside the palisades appropriately belonging to a man named *Kulika* (meaning 'Being-alone'). The water-holes and pounding rocks where meal was ground were between the several units of the village and were used in common. The fields were off to the east at from thirty minutes' to an hour's walk. The two smaller wards of Ciyanda and Kanjengo were so small that they were like two or three compounds by themselves. The former had six households with eight houses, and the latter

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593 only by a sister), and *mukãi* (sister, spoken only by a brother). In
[561] a polygynous household each of the wives is mother to all the children and each of the children is *huva* or *manja*[1] to all the others.
848 Illegitimate children are not stigmatized but since they belong to
567 the mother they have a distinct designation.[2] Slaves or former slaves have a status within the household and village which to the ordinary observer does not differ from that of the children: they are treated much as the children and they may carry on in all matters social and economic much as though they were members of the family. I have noticed, however, that when there is a call for labour, the lot falls oftener to one of these 'children-born-by-day'[3] whether he was a war-captive or a pawn.

567 Both slavery and the polygynous household, two institutions
595 manifestly and intimately inter-related, are still a part of the
●178 Umbundu social structure, but neither the one nor the other now has the importance which it formerly had. Neither of these institutions is part of the present and personal experience of the great majority of Umbundu households.

Kinship

596 *Blood Relatives* (*Epata*). The relationships of the wider kinship
602 groups are for the most part extensions of those of the household.
621 The child learns them very early in life owing to the fact that the village community into which he is born is only a part of this larger kinship group. Nearly all of the villagers belong to the same *epata* or extended family, which includes both lines of descent. Most of them belong to the father's family (*oluse*), and the mother's family (*oluina*) may also be represented. The fact is that most of the adults of the village are father or mother to nearly every child and most of the children are brothers or sisters. Those of his coevals who do not bear this relation to him are otherwise related and are also potential spouses or potential relatives-in-law.

[1] This distinction *yesepakai* (lit. 'of the jealousy of women') may be made but it is not applied in ordinary speech.

[2] *Omõlã a ngendo-lo-ina* (lit. 'child of goes-with-mother').

[3] *Omãlã-va-citiva-lutanya*. Cf. 'child of my calves', Luganda expression and attitudes, L. P. Mair, *An African People in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1934), p. 32 f.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

penricei), and *ovinyama viakasa* (animals having paws, from the lion down). No other *oluse* has any such rules. The chief function of the *oluse* is as a local residence group. Within the *oluse* there is no inheritance of property but only succession to office, which from the king to the village headman is from father to son, or from elder to younger brother, with only as much recognition of primogeniture as belongs to the general idea of the hierarchy of age. Succession to office is further affected by the democratic tendencies already noted with regard to the kingly succession.[1] The character of the *oluse* as a series of local groups is further borne out by the character of its priesthood, which lies wholly with the village headmen.

The *oluina* is not a local group, since its members for the most part live in the villages of their several lines of paternal descent—each with his *oluse*. When an Ocimbundu speaks of his family (*epata*) in the sense of a large and widespread organization with a recognized head in some elder, it is generally his *oluina* to which he refers. This family elder (*ukulu wepata*) is generally both the legal and spiritual head of the family. He is the family high-priest in charge of the spirit-hut (*etambo*) of the family guardian spirit (*osande*)[2] of whom there may be more than one and of whom he may become one after death. This family head is generally the eldest in the maternal line. In these days the priestly and the legal functions may be divided considering the advantages of having for legal head one who knows the ways of this world, while the spiritual head needs rather to be acquainted with the spirit-world. Property is inherited through the *oluina* from mother's brother to sister's son.[3] Only the *oluina* is an organization in the wider or more than local sense, and it is to it that the children belong. Formerly the mother's elder brother had great powers over his sister's sons and was even able to pawn them or sell them into slavery to meet his own debts.[4] The patrilocal household is

[1] See *supra*, p. 22 f.

[2] The head of an *oluina* may or may not be a village headman. In case he is, he will be priest of two lines and have two spirit-huts. There may be more than one spirit-hut in a single village.

[3] This fact was noted by A. Bastos, *Traços Geraes sôbre a Ethnografia do Districto de Benguella* (Lisboa, 1909), p. 33 (par. 39°).

[4] This has been noted by a number of writers. Bastos, op. cit., p. 29 (par. 26°) adds that once a father has redeemed his son, the maternal uncle can never sell him again. Cf. *avunculi potestas* among the Ba-Ila, E. W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples* (London, 1920), vol. i, p. 320.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

responsible for the children, especially during their early years, but they are frequently sent 'to the *oluina*', i.e. to the mother's brother for at least a part of their education. Herein has arisen a conflict between the claims of the paternal household and the maternal kinship group. Economic and other forces seem to have favoured the former so that 'During these days in which we stand, things have changed somewhat so that as between children and their parents, they work for their fathers for they say, "A child is strong with his *oluse* and less so with his *oluina*." Nowadays a man teaches a child work and also looks out for his education that he may advance properly. His mother's brothers (*va inanu*) have no longer much power as of old.'[1]

Bearing in mind their bilateral nature and the fact that every Ocimbundu belongs at the same time to his paternal (*oluse*) and to his maternal (*oluina*) groups, the functions of these kinship groups may be summarized as follows:

Oluse	*Oluina*
SOCIAL	
Consists of local residence units; succession of village and tribal offices from father to son, or elder to younger brother.	Extended family organization; office of family head descends from mother's brother to sister's son; children belong.
Marriage allowed between cross-cousins and other relatives of non-parallel descent; couple lives at groom's father's village.	*Marriage preferred* between cross-cousins and other relatives of non-parallel descent; children belong to mother's *oluina*.
EDUCATIONAL	
Responsibility for education of young children, especially in social usage.	Responsibility sometimes assumed in later childhood, especially for technical phases.
ECONOMIC	
Ownership and inheritance of land. (Passed from father to son or elder to younger brother.)	Ownership and inheritance of more largely negotiable and movable property, as e.g. trade goods, cattle, &c. (passed from mother's brother to sister's son).

[1] Raul Kavita Evambi, op. cit.

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602 the mother who bore me and the consideration naturally expected
592 from her cannot, in the nature of things, be given or received by *all* of the elder and younger mothers in exactly equal degree, but the type of behaviour is similar. The elder sister who carried her younger brother about on her back when she herself could hardly more than walk, or the elder brother who first taught his younger brother to make and set his little traps, has a warmth of regard which he cannot extend with just the same force to fifty or one hundred younger brothers, but nevertheless the pattern will be of the same sort if and when similar opportunity offers. The same may be said for the younger and the elder fathers, and again
605 for the *tatekāi*, the 'female father'. But here elements other than
604 the early household patterns enter as also with *manu*, the mother's brother. Chief of these other elements is the fact that these two classes of relatives, together with the *va cepua*, i.e. cross-cousins (mostly children of the *manu* and *tatekāi* classes), and also the *ovimumba* (plural) (one's own nephews along similar lines of descent), are all potential spouses or potential relatives-in-law.[1] The relations of *ocimumba* (sister's son) and *manu* (mother's brother) in Umbundu society follow a pattern not exactly like any other set of relationships in any society of which I know. Suggestions of this have already been given. The *manu* shares his sister's desire for the advancement of her son, and if the nephew has had a part of his education in the uncle's home or on his trading expeditions, the relationship will have become closer. It may be, however, that the uncle's own difficulties may lead him to exploit
602 his nephew rather than to attend only to his advancement.[2] The
178 ties of the paternal group tend to be strengthened at the expense of the maternal family and it seems that the increasing localization of the Umbundu family with the supplanting of trade by agriculture (as a man's full-time occupation) has furthered this process.

602 It is very important for one who would understand the Ovimbundu to look upon the Umbundu kinship structure with the eyes of an Ocimbundu. If one brought up to other ideas and other relationships finds this difficult, that is all the more reason for making the effort. I cannot better summarize the Umbundu

[1] See *infra*, pp. 52 ff.

[2] This is one of several points where the commercial tendencies seem to come into conflict with the patterns of the kinship group.

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754 attacks also upon the persons or possessions of enemies. This type of sorcery in a very common form involves the enslavement of the spirit of another person, often a child of one's own family or kin.[1] The person whose spirit is used may be killed either by violent or by magical means. Sorcery of this type is much feared, but if wealth supposedly gained by this means is used for the benefit of the kin, the sorcerer may be tolerated or even protected in the exercise of his black art. Beneficiaries do not often have qualms concerning the source of the benefits received. One who, by reason of his family connexions or his own power, has secured a strong position may escape interference. Jealousy or grudges, however, often bring out accusations from within the circle of kin. 754 682 Accusations may also be made by outsiders. With the decline in influence which the tribal courts have suffered, and their inability to inflict capital punishment, sorcery is less frequently punished than formerly. The consequent reductions in the number of innocent victims is a gain. This same cause has operated, however, to increase dealings in, and fear of, sorcery. [177] Most of the cases brought to European courts, and even to the Church, under the name of 'poisoning' are in reality accusations of sorcery.

178 754 In the foregoing brief note it has not been possible adequately to treat the subject, but it will be seen that sorcery has long been a divisive influence in Umbundu life. It sometimes seriously affects the cohesion of the household and the larger kinship groups. Economic, political, and other forces now seem to be acting to increase the incidence of sorcery, the influence of which is probably a considerable factor in the present rapid disintegration of the Umbundu social structure.

The Hierarchy of Age

561 Passing references have been made to associations of coevals. The Ovimbundu recognize very definitely the hierarchy of age and consider orderly society quite impossible without it. One of the keenest criticisms of the European and his ways is contained in the aphorism:

[538] *Kundele ka ku li ukulu.*
In 'civilization' there is no senior.

To Umbundu wisdom this is an impossible state of affairs;

[1] The Umbundu term is *oku andeka*; *vide* ref. *infra*, p. 107, n. 1.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

182 621 in a somewhat decadent state, the Umbundu village has up to the present maintained its status as a local kinship unit.

182 592 602 The household is not a solitary unit but a part of the village. Since it is constituted by marriage, it embodies the union of at least two kinship groups. The attitudes and behaviour patterns within the Umbundu household are basically those universally recognized. In common with the households of most Bantu cultures, it differs from the European model in that it extends its attitudes and behaviour patterns to the wider kinship groupings by means of a classificatory system of relationship.

613 182 In the wider kinship groupings (*epata*), the Ovimbundu recognize both the maternal (*oluina*) and the paternal (*oluse*) lines of descent. The functions of the latter have been largely local, residential, social, and religious, with succession (of status) in the male line. The function of the former has been cohesive over a larger territory, with a recognized head in whom has been vested both religious and economic functions. Both his office and the inheritance of property descend in the female line. Much of the power, economic and personal, formerly held by the *oluina*, in the person of the mother's brother, seems to be passing at the present time to the *oluse*, in the person of the father. The bilineal kinship system has been a strongly cohesive social force.

182 [582] The form of marriage practised by the Ovimbundu is of the two-way cross-cousin type in both lines of kin and in three generations. It seems to be an individual type developed in the particular social and economic situation of the Ovimbundu. As a contract between two families and as a new venture, the marriage relation demands that great attention be given to attitudes and behaviour patterns which emphasize mutual respect.

[561] The hierarchy of age is a very real factor in the Umbundu social structure. Age-set 'schools' have not existed generally throughout the tribes, but there are associations of coevals. This is largely a cohesive force.

754 Sorcery is the most important disruptive force at work *within* Umbundu society. Working as it does, within kinship groups, and inasmuch as it seems to be on the increase, sorcery embodies a real danger to social cohesion.

184 178 Homogeneity has never been an attribute of the Ovimbundu as regards their racial or cultural make-up. The slave-trade injected other and more diverse elements, and recent movements and

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contacts still other. As regards social and economic status, the course of Umbundu life has seen great changes: great inequalities produced by trade booms; a severe levelling down by effective European occupation and by the application of direct rule. That the Umbundu social organism through this entire process has maintained elements of cohesion and of life speaks well for its adaptability and for the vitality of its institutions.

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CHAPTER IV

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

000 THE first and most important factor to be considered with reference to a programme of education or culture change is the social structure of the people among whom the programme is to be set up and carried out. Few writers on missions among the Bantu have considered the significance for the work of the social structure itself. Perhaps the particular social structure and its possible reference to the programme described have been considered too obvious to merit careful consideration. I am reminded of an observation of the late Mr. Justice Holmes that the 'vindication of the obvious is often more important than the elucidation of the obscure'.[1] But formerly it was not considered at all obvious that a mission programme should take into consideration a people's social structure. So great a missionary and anthropologist as the 178 Reverend H. A. Junod concluded with all complacency: 'Bantu 114 collectivism is dying out. In its stead Christianity will promote a healthy and progressive individualism. . . . I see no other way in which it (the race) can escape destruction.'[2] That was written before 1929, since when advocates of individualism have been few, and fewer the students of African life who would wish to 'promote' individualism there.

000 The majority of missionary writers who have urged the adaptation or adoption of Bantu cultural elements have concerned themselves largely with beliefs, practices, and rites. If they so much as touch upon the social structure of the people under consideration, it is only to lay a basis for description of these other elements.[3] Although a number of writers have urged the desirability of conserving good elements believed to exist in 'Bantu communalism', 'African collectivism', and so on, few have offered concrete suggestions concerning the social structure, as designed to be of immediate or practical value. The one missionary who has

[1] Quoted in mimeographed suggestions concerning the use of *Essentials of Civilization*, by Thomas Jesse Jones (New York, 1929).

[2] Junod, op. cit., 2nd ed., vol. ii, p. 633; 1st ed. (1913), vol. ii, p. 544.

[3] The most recent work of this type which has come to my attention is *The Church and Primitive People* (The Religious Institutions and Beliefs of the Southern Bantu and their Bearing on the Problems of the Christian Missionary), by D. W. T. Shropshire (London: S.P.C.K., 1938).

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observation, and not in his own house. 'During that time he will not be allowed to *tumisa*. Or again, 'the girl's parents may warn her saying, Should the boy try *to sting*[1] you, do not let him: do not stay, but run away.'[2] All informants stress the point that the chief purpose of the custom is that the two young people may come to know each other as well as possible with marriage in view. There are severe sanctions against premarital pregnancy; fines to be paid by the young man or his family, lessened desirability for the girl in marriage, and a distinction in the ceremony between brides who are virgin and those who are not. Proofs of virginity are required on the marriage morning. Those families and regions which have girls' initiation camps include in the procedure a test of virginity.[3] There are not the periodic tests of virginity which are found among the Zulus, Mpondos, &c.,[4] but the Ovimbundu do not expect that the contact will be as close as these other tribes evidently do.[5] The closest parallel which I know is with the (American) colonial custom of 'bundling'.

It is said that the custom of *uponji* has been in a decadent state for a long time. This is not only because of its having been misunderstood and forbidden by the church or the missions.[6] Although this is partly the case, the chief difficulty came from the time of the rubber trade (1874–1900) when young men began without ceremony to go to the kitchens to sleep with girls instead of properly arranging matters. Whether their affluence made them reckless (i.e. of expected fines, &c.), or whether they were apeing Europeans or the customs of other tribes, is not known. At any rate, it is said that for large numbers of people this put an end to propriety. Numbers of Europeans began to settle in the country from 1891 (Viye) and 1903 (Bailundu and elsewhere), and from then until now casual relations have very greatly increased year by year.[7] That the Ovimbundu have held to their traditional forms

[1] *Lamesa*, euphemism for immission.

[2] From a statement by R. Kavita Evambi of Ciyaka.

[3] A pullet's egg is used for the test (manuscript by R. Kavita Evambi).

[4] Krige in Schapera, 1937, op. cit., p. 110 f.

[5] Among the songs which I have collected are two sung by girls to tease the young men and with references to nights spent in *uponji*.

[6] *Uwaisi* has been used in translations for 'fornication' or 'adultery' and used so persistently that it has now nearly come to have those meanings. The *Umbundu–English Vocabulary* (1911) gave a correct definition for *eponji* but not for *uponji*; its references to *embaisi* and *uwaisi* are likewise in error, while *tumisa* is not listed.

[7] Information from R. Kalupeteka and others.

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178 of marriage through all these changes, whether with or without
936 the trial marriage, is a testimony to the vitality of their culture.

883 Young people of the same age-groups are thrown constantly more closely together during adolescence in all their activities and in all aspects of their life. Strengthening of the age-groups is therefore to be expected. New names are taken at this time and the names received at birth discarded so far as possible. Boys used to go off together on hunts, on trading expeditions, &c. The girls work more individually in the fields, but are together in such communal labours as harvests. The preparation of food allows them more sociability and they have the additional advantage of congregating in kitchens not only for meals, but for the night as well. Ceremonial and social occasions are always opportunities for those of the same age-groups to get together. There is a limited amount of fagging of the immediately inferior age-group, but it is not institutionalized save where initiation camps have entered the picture.

883 Folk-lore, music, and the dance have very important roles in the
535 education of the young. The Bantu are probably among the most
533 naturally musical of all peoples and the Ovimbundu are perhaps excelled by few other Bantu. Their vocal ability is certainly superior to that of several of their immediate neighbours. Many of their songs are sung in connexion with dances. Other musical forms are road and work songs. Dancing is much enjoyed during adolescence but by no means only at that time, for it is learned in early childhood, very soon after walking, and continued on through life as long as the man or woman can get about unaided. It is a great sight to see toddlers, hardly more than able to walk, climb down off their mothers' backs and try a few steps at dancing; or again, to see a wizened and white-haired old man or woman step out and execute a *pas seul* on some ceremonial occasion. The adolescents, however, enjoy their dancing most, and they are the originators of most of the new steps and new dances which appear from time to time. The dance is of great importance to Umbundu life: social, educational, and ceremonial.

It remains to speak briefly of two institutions, neither of which is practised extensively throughout the country, nor does either seem to be a typical or integral part of Umbundu culture. These are the institutions of initiation at puberty, and the communistic order of the *vakuacisoko* (lit. 'those of the set').

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even earlier. Long before that the forerunners of the Ovimbundu kings, the 'Jagas', had sold their prisoners to the *pombeiros*. The other side of the national lineage had probably bought salt from Cisama[1] even before the white men came to the land.

Dominant Tendencies 1840–74. The next period in which there was great commercial development among the Ovimbundu began with the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, following upon the abolition of the monopoly in ivory and the development of new products as substitutes for the slave-trade, formally prohibited in 1836. This period saw a considerable increase in the number of traders resident in the region. The new régime at the coast may have caused some to go inland.[2] In Bailundu, and especially in Viye, they were well received by kings and by people who saw in the coming of more Europeans to live among them increased commercial opportunities.[3] For various reasons most of these traders established themselves in Viye,[4] and from this time Viye took first place in trade with the interior and with the coast. But since the caravan road to Benguela must pass either through

[1] Lopes de Lima, *Ensaios*, part ii, p. 55.

[2] Some statistics on these older periods are available, but since they are themselves in disagreement and none of them seem to be very reliable I do not include them here. The Report of the Governor of Benguela for 1799 gives the rather optimistic figure of 78 *whites* (including 5 women) resident in the several interior districts (*Annaes Mar. e Col.*, 1844, p. 161), with correspondingly larger numbers for persons of mixed race and (civilized) blacks. In 1838, according to Lopes de Lima (*Ensaios*, part i, p. 4 f.), the number of *whites* in the same districts was only 14, with no women, and the number of 'brown inhabitants' correspondingly small except in Cacónda, for which he gives the number of 2,992—more than in all the rest of the colony! J. R. Graça gave a list of 101 names of inhabitants of Viye alone, 'Portuguese or descendants of Portuguese . . . *including 6 Europeans*'. This was probably near the truth for 1846. Magyar (1849–57) gave very interesting calculations of the population and area of the several Umbundu kingdoms, but no figures on European residents.

[3] A very interesting glimpse of Bailundu in 1837 was given by a political exile, Carlos de Almeida Sandoval (*Annaes do Cons. Ultr., Ia Ser.*, p. 519 f.). Very full accounts of life in Viye have been given by Silva Porto, who first reached Viye in 1840, coming from Luanda (see some of his diaries in *Annaes do Cons. Ultr.*, Ser. I; *Boletim Soc. Geog. Lisboa*, Ser. 5, 6. A small volume of excerpts from Silva Porto's diaries was published in 1942 by the Agência Geral das Colónias under the title *Viagens e apontamentos de um portuense em África.*)

[4] The early continuous connexion of the dynasty with the Luanda government has been mentioned, as also the continuous appointment of a *capitão mor*. The incumbent at the time (appointed 1838) was Francisco José Coimbra, of mixed race from Cacónda (*Annaes Mar. e Col.*, 1846, p. 118; *Annaes do Cons. Ultr., Ia Ser.*, p. 112 f.). Both Cameron and the early missionaries mention dealings with his sons. Some of his grandsons and great-grandsons, now reincorporated with the Ovimbundu, still tell of their descent.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Bailundu (and its dependent states), or through Wambu and Ciyaka, while the road to Luanda lay either through Ndulu or Bailundu, these other kingdoms were not slow in following along the path of commercial success. In Ngalangi the king himself took a very active interest in trade and annually sent a royal caravan to Benguela, taking care to get a pass from the captain of the fort at Caconda. Other kings also adopted the practice of the royal caravan,[1] but the kings of the principal kingdoms were slow to give up raiding, plunder, and warfare as a manner of life[2]—a custom which became distasteful to their subjects in proportion as trade became more profitable and attractive.

In addition to those already named, there were other historical events and policies which contributed toward the development of trade during this period. The abolition in 1834 of the monopoly in ivory,[3] which the royal treasury had held since the beginning, was of great importance, and this, in turn, abetted in perpetuating the slave-trade, now a contraband, for ivory always had been brought from the interior on the backs of slaves, and it must not be supposed that this would suddenly be stopped, especially since ivory had just become much more valuable. According to Bastos,[4] slaves for this contraband trade continued to be cheap and plentiful until the eighties, which was probably due in part to the large supply offered. Another reason was perhaps that the contraband oversea trade was largely in the hands of foreigners—Brazilians, Spaniards, and Americans, who were not always reliable in the matter of paying for their cargoes.[5]

[1] *Omaka*, which had special routines and prerogatives. Other types of caravans were named from the products which they carried or conducted.

[2] See Lopes de Lima, *Ensaios*, part ii, p. 54: 'Bailundo . . . a warlike people, of the race of "Jagas", whose chief is always on a campaign'; Magyar, *Reisen*, many references, but especially pp. 290 ff., 383–420; Silva Porto, op. cit., p. 82 f., 160; *Missionary Herald*, 1883, p. 339; 1884, pp. 145 f., 504 f.; 1885, pp. 279, 375 f.; 1886, p. 228 f.; 1887, p. 106; 1889, pp. 67, 535; 1890, p. 292, &c.

[3] From 1618 (B. Rebello de Aragão, p. 14) until 1834 (Saldanha da Gama, p. 86), all critics agreed that this monopoly even defeated its own purpose, i.e. revenue; for, they said, the conditions and regulations were so onerous that the natives could not afford to bring ivory to the coast. Available statistics show that there was very little export of ivory until 1835 (Lopes de Lima, *Ensaios*).

[4] A. Bastos, *Monographia de Catumbella*, pp. 18, 25. He gives prices varying from 5$000 to 18$000 or even 20$000, and remarks that slaves were later designated as servants, redeemed ones, contracted labourers, &c. The milreis (1$000) was then worth about $1.10. Monteiro (*vide infra*) says that in the sixties 'a little nigger' could be had for 5s.

[5] J. J. Monteiro, *Angola and the River Congo*, pp. 181–4. Monteiro attributes

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

were from Viye,[1] since Viye was nearest to what was then the source of supply—Luva, Katanga, Barotze, &c. Caravans from other regions could and did pass through Viye, but they found it more economical and advantageous to go to other regions for other commodities. Bees-wax was to be found in most of the neighbouring regions and was brought to the coast by traders of all the Umbundu kingdoms. The same may be said of the 'first-class' rubber.[2] It was found chiefly in the forest regions of the interior, and the distance and consequent time involved made it a product hardly more profitable than bees-wax. Rubber was then simply one product along with the others, and until 1886 its export had its ups and downs.

Red Rubber, 1886–1900. In 1886 a caravan of Ovimbundu came down to Catumbela with loads of 'red rubber' for the first time. They had gotten it in the sandy country to the east of the Kuanza River, and a great deal nearer than the region of the 'first-class' rubber. At first, the price paid for this 'red rubber' was lower than for the other, but whereas a caravan could not procure loads of the first in less than eight months, the 'red rubber' could be gotten within three months.[3] Subsequently the red rubber was found to have certain superior qualities so that the higher price came to be paid for it. Immediately the export of rubber from Benguela increased enormously and reached undreamed-of totals.[4] Beeswax

[1] *Boletim Soc. Geog. Lisboa*, 5a Ser., pp. 5, 6, 10, 16.

[2] There are very interesting summaries and descriptions of the commercial activities of the period—both native and European—in the *Relatorios do Districto de Benguella*, 1887, 1891 (Ministerio da Marinha e Ultramar, Lisboa, 1888, 1894).

[3] See a note in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 1888, p. 450 f.

[4] The values of the three leading products exported from Benguela from 1886 to 1891 were as follows (from *Relatorios do Districto de Benguella*, 1887, 1891):

Product	*1886*	*1887*	*1888*
Rubber . .	65,210 $153	286,937 $018	664,786 $870
Wax . . .	187,483 $064	158,945 $996	109,734 $140
Ivory . . .	37,692 $536	36,923 $042	29,997 $968

Product	*1889*	*1890*	*1891*
Rubber . .	665,746 $532	781,057 $860	1,042,112 $070
Wax . . .	133,436 $344	93,680 $580	123,645 $876
Ivory . . .	31,701 $133	11,298 $782	45,390 $534

For further statistical reports of this period, see also *Portugal, Ministerio da Marinha e Ultramar, Relatorio, Propostas de Lei, &c.* (Lisboa, 1899), p. 266 f.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

dropped off; of ivory there was no more. From 1893 on, says Bastos, rubber was practically the sole export of the District of Benguela and of its hinterland.[1] In 1891 more than one million milreis' worth of rubber was exported from Benguela, sixteen times as much as was exported only five years before, and three and one-half times the value of the *three* leading exports in 1886. Until 1891 this increase was not at the expense of other exports, but rather in addition to them.

All of this rubber, and the other exports as well, came to the coast in caravans of the Ovimbundu or their neighbours. In its inception and its great development it was an enterprise of the Ovimbundu. Everyone who was able to carry a load joined a caravan. It had always been the custom to take boys on trading expeditions, as young as they could go—say, from their tenth year—as a part of their education. Now girls were also taken and hardly any but the women stayed at home to raise the crops and provide rations for the caravans. European residents experienced great difficulty in securing necessary porters,[2] and this was one reason for finally putting through the wagon-road from Benguela to Cáconda.[3] It was extended to Viye during the military campaign of 1890. The fever of the rubber trade reached into all the villages of the land and took in everyone able to travel. Mission schools had been established since 1881, but they had but few pupils until 1900. There were also other reasons for this, but a principal one was the attractiveness of the rubber trade.[4] Even the kings found it more difficult to gather armies for their wars: trade had become more attractive than the possibility of plunder.

Of all the kings who ruled the various Umbundu kingdoms during this time, the one who is best remembered is Ekuikui (II) of Bailundu (1876–93). Tradition has begun to ascribe to him and to his reign some things which properly belong to earlier

[1] Bastos, op. cit., p. 34. He does not include *serviçaes* in the exports, since they all went to the mainland or island plantations, but he remarks that at this time the price rose to even 90$000 (p. 33). The rise in price was perhaps due to the smaller supply owing to the preoccupation of the Ovimbundu with the rubber trade.

[2] See *Missionary Herald*, 1889, p. 350.

[3] *Benguella*, 1891, op. cit., p. 10.

[4] The reports of the governor of Benguela, to which reference has been made, also mentioned this fact, saying that although the American missions were intelligently directed, their results were small, since parents would not send their children to learn while they could pick up loads of rubber (1887, p. 19; 1891, p. 20).

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

and the country settled down to the rule of 'the Fort' with Ndunduma's successor named by the captain-major. The occupation of Bailundu was effected at that same time,[1] while Ekuikui yet ruled, but for several years only a nominal force was employed.[2] In 1896 Ekuikui's successor, Numa II, attacked the fort, and the captain-major burned the *ombala*[3] in retaliation. From 1890 European traders settled in both Viye and Bailundu in ever-increasing numbers.[4] Then came the 'Bailundu War' of 1902,[5] after which the occupation of the whole Umbundu country was quickly completed.

The operations of 1890 had only interrupted the ivory trade. The campaign of 1902 completely paralysed trade in and with the interior, and greatly aggravated a depression which the District of Benguela was feeling because of a fall from the high prices which rubber had enjoyed in 1898–9.[6] After the war it seemed that trade would soon regain its former levels, and the export statistics show that for a time it did so, but closer inspection and a consideration of other factors which entered into the situation show that this was the beginning of the end. The price of rubber never regained its former level, so that the high value of exports reported represents an even larger quantity than before. The increased quantity largely represented a greatly debased product, for the native traders and producers understood nothing

and Garenganze, pp. 19–23) also wrote of these incidents but with more of the personal element and perhaps less accuracy.

[1] *Relatorio, Benguella*, 1892, p. 13 f.

[2] In 1892 there were 2 soldiers in Bailundu, 135 in Viye, 21 in Caconda (*Benguella*, op. cit., 1891, p. 15). Bailundu tradition says that (native) soldiers were first brought in disguised as porters with loads of goods.

[3] *Ombala*, capital village.

[4] A. Bastos, op. cit., pp. 36, 43.

[5] This war was named in Umbundu after the Bailundu war leader, *Mutu ya Kevela*. He is named among the kings, but it was only during the war that he assumed power. The immediate causes were excesses on the part of European residents against the natives, especially in connexion with 'the recruiting of contract labour'. The best work on the subject is in the nature of a report written by the man who was then governor, Cabral Moncada, *A Campanha do Bailundo* (Luanda 1903). General ideas may be had from *Missionary Herald*, 1902, pp. 353, 400, 452 f., 520 f.; 1903, pp. 22 f., 69 f., 122, 211 f.; H. W. Nevinson, op. cit., p. 157 f.; and J. T. Tucker, *Drums in the Darkness*, p. 122 f. The account given by Keiling (*Quarenta Anos de Africa*) is of interest for certain details of this war, but its statements are inaccurate and its judgements unreliable. The missionaries sought to dissuade the natives from taking up arms, and once the fighting had begun they provided medical services for both sides and sent food-supplies to the garrison of the beleaguered Portuguese fort.

[6] A. Bastos, op. cit., p. 39 f.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

797 795 produced an Umbundu grammar,[1] but does not seem to have published material of an ethnological nature. Père Keiling (who died in 1937) and Père Batteix were both listed in *Le Répertoire Africain* as specializing in the 'Ganguella' language.[2] The Umbundu missions of this Diocese date from 1890 (Caconda), 1896 (Bailundo), 1912 (Cuando), and later. From early days this mission has had quite evident political aspects—from 1889 when a military expedition was sent against the 'Ganguella Soba[3] Tchiuaco' to re-establish Père Lecomte and the Cubango mission station which had been attacked and expelled,[4] up to the recent government charters and mission statutes, which heavily subsidize the religious work of the Roman Catholic missions in Angola. The constitution of the Portuguese Republic decrees the separation of Church and State and full religious liberty. The large subsidies and other special privileges given to the Roman Catholic Church in Angola, however, create difficulties beyond the mere allocation of tax-money. In other parts of Africa the Roman Catholic missions co-operate with the Protestant in many spheres of action. It is to be regretted that such co-operation seems not to be desired in Angola. Is it a sort of monopolistic political aim which keeps the Roman Catholic missionaries of Angola aloof? The rare instances in which a more friendly spirit has been manifested only add point to the question. The appreciative and co-operative spirit shown by Padre J. Alves Correia[5] may be cited.

797 178 754 Roman Catholics and Protestants have both been very successful from a numerical standpoint.[6] Success in building a truly indigenous Church, or in providing it with suitable and capable leadership from its own ranks, is another question hardly to be judged from statistics. More elusive still is the question whether,

[1] *Boletim Soc. Geog. Lisboa*, 1897. This grammar has gone through several editions and is still in use. The orthography is evidently intended to facilitate the use of the language by one whose native tongue is French and rather complicates matters for an African, and, indeed, for anyone whose language is other than French.

[2] H. Dubois, op. cit., p. 340.

[3] *Soba*, a native chief (from *Soma*).

[4] *Benguella*, op. cit., 1891, pp. 10 ff.

[5] See his books, *A Largueza do Reino de Deus* (Lisboa, 1932); *A Vida Mais Alta*, &c.

[6] Roman Catholics have about 280,000 and Protestants about 140,000 adherents among the Ovimbundu, according to the census taken in 1940 (Colónia de Angola, *Censo Geral da População*, vol. ix; Luanda, Imprensa Nacional, 1943).

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

or how far, Umbundu life may have been actually penetrated by a Christian spirit in matters of faith and morals. It is not surprising that after less than seventy years, or very much less in most regions, belief in witchcraft should still have a strong hold upon the minds of the Ovimbundu. Somewhat disturbing, however, is the fact that according to the latest observations, belief in and the hold of witchcraft seem at the present time to be increasing. These observations tally with what seems to be taking place in other parts of Africa.[1] According to observers in Africa and in other parts of the world the hold of witchcraft upon a people seems to increase with a decrease of security, whether relating to the economic basis of life, to health and disease, or to life's religious undergirding. In such a case, it is clearly the duty of all agencies concerned to co-operate for the removal of the cause of insecurity. Here the chief agencies are government, commerce, and missions. It is to be hoped that for the good of the Ovimbundu they may be brought together.

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[1] See *Africa*, vol. viii, no. 4, which number is devoted to studies of witchcraft. See especially the article, 'A Modern Movement of Witch Finders', by A. I. Richards, pp. 418 ff.

ocimumbo (since Childs states (p.55) that it includes every relative of the generation of the spouse's parents.) *Ndatembo* must avoid: (i) speaking each other's names. This may be accomplished by using the names compounded from those of children (thus *Nakambotia* and *Sakambotia* are the father and mother of Kambotia) or by using the terms which one's spouse uses, i.e. *mai, tate, nanu* etc. (ii) seeing each other, if they are of opposite sex; if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. (iii) eating with each other. (This applies only to regular meals and not to casual refreshment.)

(c) The term *nawa* is used reciprocally for all the spouse's relatives of one's own generation, including those classed as "sister", "brother" and "cross-cousin". Between the *nawa* the only avoidance enjoined is that they may not eat regular meals in each other's presence; otherwise they are on "free and easy" terms".

"Avoidance of meeting ... is especially difficult for the bride who comes to live in a village of her husband's people, a large proportion of the men of which may be *ndatembo* to her. The prohibition may be lifted by .. a simple ceremony, in which each rubs a little oil on the other ... Avoidance of eating in each other's presence may be done away with after some months by sacrificing a chicken and feeding it ceremonially .. to the *ndatembo* or *nawa* ... It is especially important that the ceremonies be carried through with respect *(esumbilo)*."(1)

A note on the kinship system

There is a tendency today for the claims of the *oluse*, the land-owning group, to supplant those of the property-owning *oluina*; one important reason for this is the change from trade to agriculture as the most important economic activity. With European influence also conflicts have arisen over rights to children. Childs states(2) that the bilineal kinship system has been a factor leading to social stability, especially stability of marriage, but he does not elaborate this statement.

LOCAL GROUPS(3)

The "household", consisting of a man, his wife or wives and children, and such other related or unrelated dependants as may be attached to this basic group, is the basis of the village. The word *onjo* (house) may be used for this group, i.e. to include the various houses which a man may have established by marriage, or it may be used for the house of any one of his wives. Each wife has her own hut, granary, chickens, and fields for her children and herself, and the husband has no house of his own unless he is village headman or the head of an *oluina*, in which case he has a spirit-hut *(etambo)* in which he may sometimes pass the night. Sons when they marry form their own households, usually in their father's village. The size of the household varies greatly according to wealth and status. Some recent kings have had as many as 12 wives. But it has been noted above that, in Childs' typical village, out of 48 households only 10

(1) Childs, p.52.
(2) Ibid., p.56; see also ibid. pp.70, 45, 50 etc.
(3) This section is based on Childs, 1949, pp.21-41.

were polygynous and only one of these contain more than two wives.(1)

The village or isbo (plural *ovoisbo*) may consist of from 5 to 500 such households, the heads of which are usually related agnatically to each other. Most, but not all, of the larger villages are *olombalo* (villages of chiefs or sub-chiefs). These are said to have had formerly as many as 5,000 inhabitants,(2) but today few have as many as 3,000, and there is a general tendency towards smaller villages and even isolated households.(3) There are in general two quite different types of Umbundu village according to the terrain on which they are built. Those on the plains, where there is room to spread out, tend towards a circular shape, with the *ocila* and *onjango* (see below) near the centre. The various sections of the village may appear as quarters of a single whole, or they may be spread out haphazardly. Mountain villages(4) may have houses built on ledges almost one on top of the other. Here there is often no room or no suitable soil within the palisades for gardens or for the dancing-floor *(ocila)*, which are found outside the palisade. Different sections of the village tend to string themselves out horizontally along the mountain-side, or to find successive ledges.

The typical village of Ngendo described by Childs, in Kasongi chiefdom, *etumbu* (sub-chiefdom) of Ekongo, is of an intermediate type, built on a slope. Ngendo has 196 inhabitants, of whom 42 are men, 60 are women, and 94 children. The village is divided into four smaller sections or wards (*ovitawila* pl.), of which the largest, that of the village headman *(sekulu)* has 127 inhabitants, while the other three have 19, 13 and 37 inhabitants respectively. The word isbo (village) may also be used for either of the two larger sections by themselves. Each section has its own elder, but the dancing-floor *(ocila)*, which is the centre of village life, is in the headman's section. The *ocila* is primarily a place for recreation, but religious functions also are held in it, and formal cases tried. Formerly most villages had a second communal building, the *onjango* or "Men's Club House",(5) whose importance was almost as great as that of the *ocila*. Here all the men, youths and boys gathered for the evening meal, and here guests were entertained, lesser judicial cases settled, and the day's work and gossip discussed, while young boys, sitting in the background, gained much of their knowledge of tribal history and custom.(6) Today the *onjango* exists and maintains its former function chiefly in parts of Ngalangi, Viye and possibly Ndulu. It does not exist in Childs' typical village, where the "Men's Club" holds only occasional meetings on the rocks behind the headman's house, and where the common evening meal no longer takes place. The reason suggested for the disappearance of the *onjango* is lack of leisure owing to demands for road work (in the immediate vicinity of Ngendo), for contract labour, involving absences of from six months to a year,(7) and the difficulty of securing tax-money.

(1) And polygyny is thought to be more frequent here than in other areas. See above, p.23.
(2) According to Magyar, 1851.
(3) Childs, op.cit., p.25, fn.1. Childs does not suggest any reason for this tendency.
(4) Formerly many villages were built on mountains for defence, and capital villages of this type may still be seen.
(5) The "Men's Club" seems to be simply a gathering of all the adult men (and possibly also the juveniles) of the village.
(6) Childs, op.cit., Cranmer, 1944; Hambly, (2) 1934.
(7) Most of the labour on the Benguella Railway is Umbundu, and many Ovimbundu travel to the Union of South Africa for work. (Childs, op.cit., p.10, et.al.)

time to the village of the paramount chief. These periods spent away from home continue into adolescence. Not only relatives, but also friends, blood-brothers and *vakuacisoko* (see below) exchange children in this way.

Later childhood

No definite time marks the transition from early to later childhood, but there are marked differences between the two stages. As soon as the child is physically able, he begins to assume a definite role in the community. Soon after a child gets his permanent teeth, a notch in the form of an inverted V is chipped between the two upper front incisors. Formerly the beginning of the period was marked for the boy by his first trip with a trading caravan; today a boy of this age may begin to work in the fields with his father, or begin to learn a trade, or be sent to school. A girl starts to learn field-work and housework.

Professions

A boy is expected to learn the profession or *ocipinduko* in which his father or his mother's brother is expert, and after that, should he wish to learn some other side-line profession, he may apprentice himself. All children, both boys and girls, are expected to learn to cultivate; but that is not counted as a profession. The principal *ovipinduko* (professions) listed by Childs are: for girls, basket-making, pottery-making, medical practice and divination; for boys, mat-making, wood-working, rope-making, thatching, fishing, apiculture, hunting, smithing, and medical practice and divination. The last three, as has been mentioned above, are "sacred" and entered under special conditions.

"Later childhood, then, is the period of technical training during which it is expected that a large amount of economic responsibility will be assumed. A child begins to own property even before this, and from the beginning of childhood will be accounted legally responsible for his actions. It is recognised, however, that he should not be set tasks beyond the experience or ability of his age and that the full responsibility of adulthood will come only with marriage."(1)

The coming of European commerce, industry, and government has created new types of employment for boys and men, some of which cause a prolonged absence from the village and a loosening or severing of kinship ties. There are no estimates of the number of persons employed by Europeans, or the average length of their absence from home.

ADOLESCENCE(2)

Childs found that the onset of puberty was late among the Ovimbundu, coming between fourteen and sixteen years for girls and between fifteen and seventeen years for boys. Soon after puberty young people generally stop sleeping in the parents' house. The girls congregate in kitchens and each boy builds himself a house, in which he will live through adolescence

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.110.
(2) Based on Childs, op.cit., pp.58-9 and 111-18.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

In northern Angola the Ovimbundu could not have had other than a warlike existence, which trained them in military tactics and the building up of an aggressive confederacy. In this they were aided by contact with the Portuguese, who supplied guns and powder in exchange for slaves and ivory from the interior. This accumulated wealth further stimulated the building up of Umbundu tribal life.

Introduction of maize by the Portuguese gave the Ovimbundu a knowledge of this grain, which later became their staple wealth and food supply.

The cultural pattern of the northern Congo was the same in the year 1600 as it is today, and consideration of the ethnology of the Congo region reveals numerous similarities with Umbundu culture of the present time.

Writings of explorers in Angola from A.D. 1800 to the present day bring out many points which are in agreement with my field observations. There are no discrepancies which would make me question the validity of information given by my informants.

In early records, Battell's observation of cattle in the hinterland of Benguela (1600), is important in showing that at such an early date the Ovimbundu had access to cattle when raiding from their home in the Benguela Highlands.

From these fundamentals of geography and history the inquiry turns to a detailed account of my observations among the Ovimbundu and surrounding tribes.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

A principal wife builds up her
302 [595] 171 hair into five high cones. Vachokue women mass their hair into separate balls shaped and held by clay and red coloring matter. I know of no hairdressing for Vachokue men, but ornamental wooden combs are sometimes used.

304 In only one place have I seen a nose pin worn, namely, the Esele country of Vila Nova de Selles. The fashion is out of date, but women of only twenty-five years of age have the septum of the nose bored; evidently the custom has not been obsolete for a long period (Plate LXXV, Fig. 1).

177 439 301 The most popular European importations are blue cloth with white spots, metal hair combs, beads, and bright metal crosses bearing a figure of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus. This ornament has penetrated to districts far away from Christian missions, and its wide dispersal shows that a newly introduced and attractive ornament from a foreign source may readily be accepted by tribes of different cultures.

517 301 There are interesting points of psychology in the attitude of the Ovimbundu toward European importations. Only a few patterns of cloth are favored, and there is no sale for any other design. Some designs are thought to be appropriate for young girls while others are favored by older women. The same may be said of colored beads, for whereas both blue and white beads are the usual decoration for young women and immature girls, red beads are worn chiefly by the elderly women.

178 A consideration of personal ornament establishes the general truth that in scarification, hairdressing, tooth mutilation, the use of red powder and grease, the anointing of the hair with palm oil, and the wearing of trade cloth, leather, or bark cloth, there is little exchange of styles. There are diffusions in language and other cultural traits, but decorative elements which have for a long period been regarded as distinctive of tribal life are rigidly preserved.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

[1874-1911]

THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVERRIGNTIES

178 The great distinguishing mark of the Ovimbundu was their participation in the caravan trade. Some of the neighbouring people also engaged in trading journeys (e.g. the Chokwe) but in central Angola the dominant traders were the Ovimbundu by reason of their control of the routes to Benguela and Catumbela, a control which as Livingstone's narrative shows they tried for a while to turn into a monopoly.[43] With this must be linked 177 the greater readiness of the Ovimbundu to adopt European ways, marked by the general adoption of cloths for wear by at latest the mid-nineteenth century.[44]

3. *Economics and Social Structure*

101 This section will describe the economic life and social structure which marked the period of the rubber trade (1874–1911). 436 A genuine currency existed in the form of cloth, and fortunes 439 could be made in it. Serpa Pinto tells us of one Otjimbundu who made £3,500 by trading in the interior and that he had met many men who 'turned over capital of a thousand to twelve hundred pounds sterling',[45] presumably in trade goods since Portuguese currency did not circulate among the Ovim- 361 bundu. At the capitals of the kingdoms genuine towns grew up. Magyar in the middle of the nineteenth century estimated that [162] 5,000 people lived at Bailundo[46] and the British explorer Cameron who had crossed Africa from Zanzibar says of Ekovongo, the capital of Bie, 'the town of Kagnombe, the largest I came across during my whole journey, being more than three miles in circumference. On arrival I was met by the 644 Kagnombe's secretary, chamberlain, and captain of the guard who wore red waistcoats as a sign of their dignity. The secretary was more ornamental than useful, being unable to write, but a subordinate, a black man and native of Dondo, was better educated and conducted the trade of Kagnombe with the coast'.[47]

[43] Ibid., p. 205.
[44] Ibid., p. 206, referring to Magyar as evidence.
[45] Serpa Pinto, pp. 161–2.
[46] Magyar, p. 391.
[47] V. L. Cameron, *Across Africa*, London, 1877. Vol. II, pp. 206–7.

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journeys diminished in distance as they increased in profitability.[53]

My informants, however, gave a somewhat different picture. Long trading journeys were still being undertaken in the last decade of the trade (1901–11). Some men whom I met had travelled to the kingdom of the Mwata Yamvo and beyond to Luba country; one man had made a journey into what is now the Congo Republic which took a year to go and a year to return; another had visited Barotseland. It should be said that these seem to have been unusually long journeys; journeys totalling six to eight months were common.[54]

The significance of the trade in social life is reflected in the mystical explanations of success in business found in Umbundu religion. Prosperity might be explained either by the favour of spirits such as Kandundu and Otjipukú, who received at their shrines libations of wine, or by malevolent sorcery involving the sacrifice of relatives in exchange for wealth.[55] The existence of these two explanations probably reflects the existence of some rich men who satisfied the expectations of their relatives and others who did not.

Apart from the rubber trade, the older slave trade continued until its vigorous suppression in the period 1910–12, and indeed seems, as regards the Ovimbundu, to have become intensified in the period after 1890. The slaves went to S. Tome and Principe, or to coastal plantations. Up to that time the Ovimbundu had sold few of their own people, with the exception of criminals or people who had become generally unpopular with their kin. The collapse of the old political system played into the hands of adventurers who unscrupulously exploited the Umbundu custom of debt slavery or conducted raids for this purpose.[56]

It was then the 'trade' which was the common factor in the life of all Ovimbundu, and which was so to speak the factor,

[53] Childs, p. 208.

[54] Informants.

[55] Although some old men still have shrines to the luck-giving spirits it is not possible to see how their cult functioned in the social structure then existing. It is, however, notable that success could be interpreted mystically in two ways by benevolent spirits or by sorcery.

[56] Childs, p. 213. I was told that Gumba had been raided from Bailundo.

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could be resolved in the matrilineal group.[78] Hastings, who gives the most detailed account of the matrilineal groups, which he calls sibs, tells us, 'There can be no exaction of fines or taking of slaves between the members of a sib group—the group members are supposed to pay each other's debts, and one who has wealth and refuses so to communicate may be secretly poisoned by the others. It is within the group of matrilineal sibs that most compacts, whether social or economic, are formed and operate. The same is true even of malevolent plots and anti-social practices, such as killing by witchcraft.'[79]

Clearly, the matrilineal groups in which the rich had to pool their wealth with poorer kinsfolk and in which trading arrangements[80] were made indicate the adaptation of the kinship system to the needs of the trade. It may be suggested that one of the functions of the double descent system was to separate the fields of village and chiefdom relations, established through patrilineal ties, from the field of commerce, credit, and the inheritance of wealth gained by trade. Thus the conflicts in which a man would be involved in one set of relations would not involve his other set of ties, and this distribution of stresses must have limited the strains set up by disputes. The distinction between the local group and the commercial group would also prevent heavy losses from trade striking a whole village simultaneously.[81] The credit institutions demanded by a trading system in which debt was frequently incurred were fitted into the kinship system, and associated with a device for levelling those who had become prosperous in the trade.

Unhappily the disintegration of the traditional social structure, and the accompanying loss of knowledge of it, prevented me from adding to, or even corroborating entirely, the written material on the form of the matrilineal groups.[82] It is not at all evident how the groups maintained integration, or how new

[78] Hambly, p. 200.

[79] Ibid., p. 92.

[80] Dr. Childs suggested to me that the core of the caravans might be composed of kin. However, the caravans were so large that they clearly could not be organized on a kinship basis. See also Serpa Pinto, p. 165.

[81] This point was suggested to me by Dr. Mary Douglas.

[82] I did not obtain any information on the size of the matrilineal group, the existence of heads of the groups, and the degree to which it was a congregation.

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kingdoms of the Ovimbundu, though more frequently perhaps it was made against the non-Umbundu peoples.[89]

The question of the influence of the trade provides interesting opportunities for comparison. The Ovimbundu were the southernmost of the peoples who in the nineteenth century participated in the trade between the Europeans of the West African coast and the peoples of the interior.[90] In some ways the Ovimbundu seem to have been less influenced by it than were some of the peoples further north. The Ovimbundu did not develop genuine patterns of urban life as in Dahomey or Benin.[91]

Three explanations can be offered for the relative failure of associational groups and urban society to develop. Umbundu crafts were much inferior to those found along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea; there was no indigenous weaving industry, for instance, and the goods which the caravans carried to the interior were all of European or American origin, cloths, guns, and rum.[92] For these goods the Ovimbundu were dependent on the Portuguese settled at the coast or in the Highland and this meant that the Ovimbundu were far from economic autonomy. Again the trade had a relatively short time span—the real boom period lasted only from 1886 to 1900, and earlier on in the 1840's when the beeswax, ivory, and slave trade was flourishing, the Ovimbundu had plenty of time for warfare.

It would, however, be a grave mistake to think that trade had only a marginal influence on Umbundu society. It has been suggested that the form of the double-descent system owes its origin to the necessity to isolate economic relations from other social fields. In the sphere of ritual, there are some remarkable copies of European practices—for instance the holding of a feast in honour of the ancestors at Christmas-time.[93] Many ritual concepts are related to the explanation of business

[89] For information on Umbundu warfare see Magyar, pp. 277–80 and Serpa Pinto, pp. 177–9.

[90] See Balandier, *Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire*, Paris, 1955, for a discussion of social change in other areas which had experienced a trade of a similar sort.

[91] For Dahomey see M. J. Herskovits, *Dahomey*, New York, 1938. For Benin see R. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom* (Ethnographic Survey of Africa), London, 1957.

[92] Childs, p. 206.

[93] Informants.

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bought in the towns, and men returning from South Africa are said to bring all sorts of goods including typewriters. The traders do not lend money though they sometimes give credit. The living standards of the traders are often low, some being unable to buy a truck, and having therefore to come to terms with someone who has one. I have even heard of traders having to eat the staple Umbundu mush (*pirão* in Portuguese).

While the traders play an extremely important role in the local economy they do not establish any permanent face-to-face relationship with the natives outside their household and store, because they are not interested in them and have no reason to be. This does not apply in the same way to African *assimilados*, actual or self-styled, of whom there were a few in the neighbourhood, who lived more or less in Portuguese style. Of these one in particular, Justino, made a hobby of settling disputes, and will therefore re-appear later on. Their main source of revenue was coffee-growing, and they would occasionally have local labour working for them. As they tend to identify themselves with the 'civilized' population, their attitude to the natives is not unlike that of the traders, but culturally and linguistically they are linked to the Ovimbundu villagers, and if of local origin will have kinship links too.

This group is significant because it is in the total social structure of Angola a link between the 'civilized' and 'non-civilized' communities. Both the *assimilados* and those pseudo-*assimilados* who have persuaded the natives that they are *assimilados*, identify themselves with the whites but are also linked much more closely with the natives than any other group. As the division into 'civilized' and 'non-civilized' is legally sanctioned on the grounds of culture not race, a group which participates to some degree in the cultures of both sections must be of great significance in the study of the means by which the whole society is integrated. In the neighbourhood where I worked this group of Europeanized Africans were few in numbers,[20] both absolutely and in relation to other parts of Angola.

[20] I only know of one genuine *assimilado* in the neighbourhood though there were others who claimed to be such. Galvão and Selvagem (p. 408) remark of the Cazengo concelho of northern Angola, 'The great number of civilised negroes, some planters incorporated in the European economic system, hastened the disintegration and confusion of the tribal institutions.'

[assimilados are Africans possessing Portuguese citizenship -- Analyst]

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does not give them any claim to financial assistance from the people, or control over natural resources, such as land rights. The only prerogative of this sort that the chief has is the right to the leg of an antelope killed in a hunt or a bull killed in a commemoration rite—and this is of symbolic rather than economic importance.

Nor, finally, does the post give the chiefs prestige and support.[11] Five successive chiefs of Gumba had been deposed by the post, and it is not uncommon for chiefs and government headmen to be beaten or otherwise punished (for instance by being made to work for a fortnight at the post) for their shortcomings. They have in fact just sufficient power to carry out the commands of the *chefe* and to do nothing more. They are not disliked by the local people for doing what the *chefe* tells them to do, but any attempt at dictatorial behaviour on their part will stir up opposition which may lead to their downfall.

The relations between white *chefe* and black chief vary according to individuals and neighbourhoods. Sometimes the *chefe* will allow the chief to be chosen according to tradition; at other times he will impose a candidate of his own. A *chefe* may hear any cases that are brought to the post, or he may delegate the power of hearing minor cases to the chiefs. Some *chefes* will regard the chiefs with hostility as being enemies of their own people; others will abstain under any circumstances from beating a chief, as they feel their power should be supported. Here I describe the situation as it was in Gumba and in Bimbe generally.

A visit to a chief's village in Gumba or elsewhere will give an opportunity of meeting those residents who hold the ministerial titles, of gazing under overshadowing trees at the enclosure in which are kept the skulls of former chiefs, and perhaps of seeing the chief and some of his cronies dance to a drum in commemoration of one of his predecessors. Ministers, skulls, dances, and drum are symbols of chiefly nostalgia rather than of political power. The ceremonies have little interest for the people in general, and many of them have been abandoned by the chief. Lusase's first wife had not, as custom demanded,

[11] For criticism of this policy by two Portuguese with administrative experience see Galvão and Selvagem, p. 213.

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become *inakulu* (queen) because she feared the unpleasant haunting by the spirits of former queens which is traditionally experienced by the holder of this office.[18] On one occasion Lusase himself offered to let me into the *akokolo* (the enclosure where the skulls of dead chiefs were kept) for the payment of five or ten escudos (1s. 3d. or 2s. 6d.) although the entry of anybody except the chief and possibly certain of his courtiers appears traditionally to have been forbidden under the penalty of death sent by the spirits. Even the surviving rites are confined to the chief's village; the first-fruits ceremony in which the whole chiefdom was involved disappeared a number of years ago. The association general in Umbundu country between the chiefs and paganism does not provide an added ritual sanction to the chief's power, but rather links him with what is felt to be a dying past, essentially unimportant, at the present day.

The chief may also have some of his time occupied with hearing cases. A good many minor disputes are solved by local adjudication, but there seems to be no specific division between cases that ought to come to the chief and those which can be arbitrated by somebody else. Elders from outside a chiefdom may be invited to adjudicate on a particular case. The old formality of legal procedure has largely disappeared, probably because all disputes at a local level can be carried to the post—hence any ruling by chief or elders is essentially dependent on its acceptance by the disputants.

Accusations of sorcery are rather different from other cases since the post does not believe them, although such an accusation is not in itself punishable. Sometimes suspected sorcerers are accused at the post of 'poisoning'.[19] Lusase told me that convicted sorcerers were fined a chicken, a goat and a pig. Gregorio, the chief of Menga, at first said, when I asked about this, that it was not possible to know who was a sorcerer. When, rather to his surprise, I mentioned the traditional basket test, he agreed and explained that people convicted by this test were sent as labourers to the post to satisfy whatever demand was being made for workers.

[18] Informants. See also Hastings, p. 49.

[19] Childs, p. 58.

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government headman is not the same person as the traditional headman he may become involved in quarrels unless he is careful to accept the position of the traditional headman; and both government headman and traditional headman may find it wise to be on good terms with the catechist and the elder of the school.

It is fairly simple to define the obligations of the government headman. Discussing the position of the traditional headman vague words such as 'influence' and 'prestige' must be used to describe a vague position. Indeed a purely synchronic picture would be inadequate, since the present position of the traditional headmen and the contemporary village organization must be understood against a historical background.

3. *Headmen and Their Villages*

In the time of the rubber trade the village headman was both the leader of a body of agnatic kinsmen and the representative of his village in the wider political system, the village headmen sitting with the chief to judge cases. Both Childs and Hambly emphasize the importance of the judicial role of the village headmen. Childs states that the village headman was also a ritual leader, being responsible for 'regular village worship including agricultural festivals'.[16] I have found no evidence of such ceremonies on a village basis. The only ritual which, according to my older informants, the village headman should perform for his people is communing with his ancestor spirits in the spirit hut during a village hunt, and this information was not confirmed by all my older informants. It may be added that I found no evidence of any installation rite for a new headman.

It may be assumed that a good deal of the old village structure survived till the middle or end of the 1930's. Dr. Childs in his description of the village of Ngendo (Cassongue) as it was in 1935–6 indicated that agnatic kinship was the main principle of village recruitment, and that this was typical of other Umbundu villages.[17] In Gumba it was still possible at this time

[16] Childs, p. 46.
[17] Ibid., pp. 23–27.

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for individuals to build up large villages—thus Simbwyikoka encouraged people to settle at Mwekalia to make it a large village. It may also be suggested that the power of the village headmen was to some extent linked with the power of the chief, since the headmen were associated politically with the chief, and would from this, tend to gain authority in their dealings with their fellow villagers. The village headmen also lacked any real competition from other types of leadership. Mbati had kept relations with the post in his own hands, and there were therefore no government headmen. The first catechist had arrived in Mbati's village in 1928, but cannot have met with much lasting success as there are few baptized Christians over thirty-five in Gumba.

Other factors at the time strengthening the position of the village headmen were the low rate of labour migration[10] and the fact that practically every man over forty at the time of Simbwyikoka's accession had participated in the rubber trade. This meant that many of the best known caravan leaders were still in full vigour, and enjoyed a prestige based on the first-hand knowledge of the middle-aged and older men.

Between this period of the middle thirties and the beginning of my own fieldwork twenty years had passed and many changes had taken place. The status of the chief had sharply declined and he was now assisted by the four government headmen. Every village except the chief's village had a Catholic or Protestant catechist, and there had been a marked trend towards learning catechism in preparation for baptism, which had begun about 1946. Hence the catechetical school was usually attended by the majority of under twenty-five's in the village.

Agnatic kinship had ceased to be the principle of village membership. Nor can it be said that headmen build up villages by getting people to settle at a particular spot. It is not always easy even to find the headman, village population is not very stable, and a man can settle with any category of kin.

To discover the traditional headman required careful phrasing of questions. When I visited a village and asked for the *sukulu yimbo* (the traditional phrase for the village headman) I

[10] Ibid., p. 214.

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On the village level, however, the importance of the mother's brother tie and of the tie between matrilateral 'brothers' becomes very apparent. None of Sapapula's four sons had settled in Epalanga, and his only classificatory 'son' was Gonçalve, own son to Mwehombo, Sapapula's matrilateral 'brother'. Seven household heads were sister's sons of Sapapula. This trend for matrilateral ties to predominate is marked also in Katembo and Mbunga, but less evident at Belem. Indeed, 'neo-matrilinearity' as a principle of village structure may be a general and not simply a local feature of Umbundu society, since Mr. C. M. N. White[18] has found that the settlements of Ovimbundu within Northern Rhodesia are marked by a predominance of matrilateral ties. This is referable to the contemporary kinship system in which the father-son tie is predominantly a personal one, with a limited extension of attitudes to classificatory fathers, whereas a man's relation with a mother's brother seems little affected by the question of genealogical distance. Perhaps the relations between the group of agnatic kin were so closely tied to the old village structure that when it broke up it disintegrated also the wider agnatic ties. Yet at the same time such matrilineal institutions as matrilineal inheritance and the non-repayment of loans among matrikin have weakened or disappeared.

Running counter to this principle of settling in the village of a senior kinsman who is likely to belong to one's matrikin, is the principle of cross-cousin marriage. 'If you have married your cross-cousin when your son grows up he will see a cross-cousin here, a cross-cousin there, and so he will stay.' That is, a man will stay in his father's village not simply by virtue of the father-son tie but because he will be surrounded by kinsmen. The relation between cross-cousins is one of equality and solidarity, expressed in joking and in burial services. To say that one stays in a place because one has cross-cousins at hand is to indicate an ideal of equal relations with a circle of kinsmen rather than attachment to the following of an important kinsman.

These two principles co-exist in actual social life. A man will recognise and respect a number of senior kinsmen living in his

[18] In letters.

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neighbourhood and will explain his choice of residence by quoting the names of one or more of these; yet the weaving together of so many strands of kinship and affinity, ultimately through marriage links, is what gives the local population its relative degree of stability. It should be emphasized that the integration established within a village by the network of kinship and affinal ties is dependent on the integration created by the same amorphous network which runs through and beyond the sub-chiefdom. It is this network into which the individual is woven by multiple ties that absorbs the neo-matrilineal pull apparent to some degree in choice of residence and keeps the system essentially cognatic.

The use of the word *família* reflects this situation. A man may say of a particular senior kinsman 'He is my *família*', that is, my kinsman, my most important kinsman with whom I have settled, yet also he may say 'My *família* is in Cela', that is, the greater part of my kinsmen live in Cela. When Bartolomeu explained that he had settled where he did because of Lusase, he was perhaps combining the two kinds of references. He had settled in Gumba because he had a large number of kinsmen there among whom Lusase was pre-eminent. A man explaining the locality of his *família* in the wider sense will associate it with a particular sub-chiefdom—'My family is all in Menga'—when he is outside it; when he is in it he is more likely to refer to a particular village.

Although individuals living in a village may have come there through several kinship sources yet the majority of them will probably have some kinship or affinal tie with the traditional headman. This collection of individual ties does not provide the headman with a body of followers, nor is having a large number of dependants a value of contemporary Umbundu culture. If it were felt that the best thing to be in life is the patron of a body of kinsmen and followers, headmanship would survive as a predominant influence in local life despite the collapse of its political and legal responsibilities. In fact not even old men feel this way.

The idea of the village as a corporate group with a jural and political personality rather than a residential unit has not survived the break-up of agnatic solidarity, the disappearance

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of the men's house, and the headman's loss of status. The new institution of the catechetical school does not revive village solidarity in this form. The contemporary Ovimbundu do not live in a 'village headman society' comparable to those of British Central Africa,[13] since the concept and manifestations of village solidarity around a headman are so notably deficient. Reference may also be made to the economic ethics of the Ovimbundu with their approval of making money and the belief that all loans even within the circle of the elementary family should be repaid, that is, wealth is seen by all as an end in itself rather than a means of obtaining personal loyalties.

In the previous chapter it was shown how the traditional headmanship is no longer a significant legal and political institution. In this chapter I have tried to indicate that it lacks sources of authority and prestige within the village.

The line of argument has involved reference to the contemporary kinship system of which an outline has been given. This will be more fully discussed in later chapters, when a more detailed comparison of present institutions with the traditional kinship system will be made.

[13] *For an example of these societies see* J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester 1956.

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unambiguous approval, though there is a certain undertone suggesting cunning in the verb *oku lunguka* (to be shrewd) used about prosperous people. The old suspicion of sorcery attaching to people who were more successful farmers than their neighbours[6] seems to have disappeared. While a prosperous villager would be expected to lend money to a poorer kinsman (provided the latter was not known as a bad debtor) yet, the situation which occurs in other parts of Africa, where, as Dr. V. W. Turner notes of the Mwinilunga Ndembu, prosperous Africans 'find themselves increasingly embarrassed by the demands of their kin for presents in cash and kind'[7], would not arise among the Ovimbundu, who would regard such demands as being unjustified, even outrageous.

Wealthy Ovimbundu may spend some of their wealth on clothing and on drink. Cattle-buying has been noted as a form of capital investment and the same term may be used of small stock buying. Another way of disposing of money is by building a house of bricks with the assistance of a bricklayer. A plough may be, but rarely is, bought by two men joining together to pool their money. Generally speaking, the agricultural technology of the Ovimbundu has been little changed since 1911 except for the spread of the techniques of coffee-growing.

It has been noted earlier that the Ovimbundu play an important part in the economic life of Angola both as cultivators and labourers. In this chapter an attempt has been made to show how at the local level it is the cultivation of cash crops, rather than migration for wage labour, which incorporates villagers into the commercial economy of modern Angola. The main source of money in rural areas is the trader's store, which is also the main recipient of money, apart from the administration. While trade both between Ovimbundu and between Ovimbundu and other tribes survives on a minor scale, the social institutions associated with the rubber trade, the large caravans, the non-repayable loans within the matrilineal group, and the obligations of wealthy traders to assist their kin, have disappeared. The contemporary social structure with the

[6] Childs, pp. 106-8.

[7] V. W. Turner, op. cit., p. 135.

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instability of village sites and village populations, the marked emergence of the elementary family, and the non-existence of economic activities and rights associated with corporate groups, is consistent with the growth of cash crops by shifting cultivation.

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of the school seems considerably stronger than that of their Catholic counterparts. This impression is gained by visits to Protestant villages and to episodes like that just quoted, where the Protestant catechist had more success than the Catholic in recruiting volunteers for work on the bridge. The reasons for this lie in the organization of the Protestant Church, which owes its origin to Congregationalist missionaries, and in which the distribution of power differs from that in the Catholic Church. The white missionaries exercise only a supervisory role over the work of the Native Church which is responsible for pastoral activity in the villages. The African clergy of the Native Church are entirely dependent financially on their people.

Compared with Catholicism, Protestantism lays much less stress on the sacraments of baptism and communion and much more on Bible-reading and the religious knowledge of the individual. Hence the teaching role of the catechist is more strongly stressed among the Protestants. For example, the Protestant catechists teach girls as well as boys to read and write. His dependence on the clergy is reduced; indeed, owing to the lay participation in the Umbundu Native Church he exercises some control over them. Among the Ovimbundu, as elsewhere in the world, the 'pyramidal' form of Catholicism is absent in Protestantism in which the position of the clergy is weaker and that of the lay leaders strengthened.

The relative autonomy of the Umbundu Native Church *vis-à-vis* the white missionaries and the disintegration of the traditional system of authority have given judicial powers to its officials. Dr. Childs has written in a recent article:[1] 'In Angola . . . the breakdown of traditional authority has been so rapid that the social life of the villages is now very near to complete anarchy . . . the missions and churches have been compelled to take over. Church leaders—catechists, deacons, and pastors—have taken on judicial functions. Church meetings, both local and regional, have become courts and councils.' He goes on to describe the legalistic attitudes and casuistical morality which is associated with these developments, and suggests that the lack of opportunity for political activity

[1] G. M. Childs, *International Review of Missions*, April 1958.

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confines the pursuit of power to the Native Church with unfortunate results. It might, on the other hand, be suggested that the Protestants among the Ovimbundu are the section of the population who have come nearest to building up new systems of authority and law. It might also be suggested that Umbundu Protestantism retains certain historical features of Congregationalism—democratic selection of officials with strict discipline binding members of the congregation, industriousness and zeal for education, and a certain consciousness of being a spiritual *élite*.[1]

Another factor in the situation is that the Protestants are a minority compared with the Catholics and tend to have the heightened self-consciousness of religious minorities. They also tend to isolate themselves from the pagans much more than the Catholics do, both geographically by moving into separate hamlets and separate villages and by the greater efforts they make to understand and follow European custom. Protestants for instance seem to know more how the Portuguese kinship terms should be used.

Ultimately, the position of the catechist, whether Catholic or Protestant, is dependent on his role as a teacher of Christian doctrine, and as being a representative of 'modern' values. It may be said that Christian doctrine and 'modern' values are not necessary identical. It is, however, in this field that the Ovimbundu establish their closest contacts with the Europeans. A Protestant explaining why a kinship usage had been discontinued said: 'We are Christians, we are like the Europeans.' A Catholic catechist arguing the superiority of Catholicism to Protestantism began by saying that the Protestants had no sacraments—then the elder of the school chimed in saying: 'And ours is the religion of the government.' The catechist took up this theme: 'The *chefe de posto* is baptized and married in church, the Governor-General [*sic*] of Nova Lisboa is baptized and married in church.' During my first weeks in Epalanga I was asked by the catechist: 'Are there priests in England?' and replied that in England there were both Catholics and Protestants, on which the catechist commented: 'It's the same

[1] For the history of Congregationalism see E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, London, 1931, Vol. II, p. 661–6.

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thing in Bimbe.' That is, church membership is recognized as giving entry to a world-wide grouping. This sense of being linked to the Europeans by participation in the same sacraments is paralleled on the European side by the custom widespread in Angola of whites standing as godparents to their servants or servants' children. More generally, the missions are regarded as being the cause of that social change which is welcomed by Ovimbundu. Thus the fact that this was 'the time of the school' was given by one of my servants as the reason for such improvements as the decline of sorcery and the increase of cleverness.

Ovimbundu Christians are also aware of the doctrinal significance of baptism—when I asked various people 'Why did you receive baptism?' a general reply would be: 'I want to go to heaven', or some equivalent phrase. The apprehension of Catholic doctrine by the Ovimbundu is a complicated subject. It may be said that the receiving of the sacraments is the aspect of religion that has made most impression on the people. In the conversation previously cited, the catechist began by emphasizing the presence of sacraments as the distinctive mark of Catholicism against Protestantism, and then when the elder of the school pointed to the official associations of Catholicism, the catechist developed this by indicating the receiving of sacraments by those in high office. In the same way a catechist may commend somebody by saying: 'He is baptized and married in Church', as we would say of somebody: 'He is a real Christian'. The contact of the people with the priests, whether at the mission, or in the villages, usually involves the making of confessions and the receiving of communion. Cultural traits particularly characteristic of Portuguese Catholicism are little marked with the exception of the social importance of the godfather-godson tie. Christian ideas of the after-life have penetrated among the pagans, who will say that the soul after death goes to God (Suku) except in the case of bad people who go to hell.

The social relations between Christians and pagans are friendly. The old rites in which the sub-chiefdom as a whole participated have disappeared, and the rites performed at the capital, a liturgy which like other aspects of chieftaincy is a shadow of its former self, arouse little public interest. Christians

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servant of mine explaining how the Mwekalia chose the chief said, giving me a comparison: 'The Bishop of Nova Lisboa thinks "This priest has sense" and so makes him the superior of a mission'.[6] The disintegration of the old political system, and the association of its representatives with the ritual values which are no longer very significant for the mass of Ovimbundu, has destroyed the old pyramid of authority and prestige. The people associate demands and punishment, for which they seem to receive very little in return, with the post. Many draw a distinction between the actual *chefe* and the government, which they regard as benevolent and ignorant of the behaviour of its representatives. Despite such expressions of loyalty as the singing of the Portuguese national anthem at village parties the 'government' is too distant and shadowy for the Ovimbundu to have much knowledge of it. Nor has the post tried effectively to build up new types of bureaucratic authority in the villages—the government headmen are not given sufficient backing or responsibility by the post to do more than execute its orders.

Hence, the establishment of new types of grouping and leadership at the local level has been the work of the missions, and it is through the missions that these new groupings are articulated on to the total Angolan social system. The missionaries, who provide this articulation between the 'civilized' society and the local organization of the natives, form the section of the 'civilized' population which most satisfies, in its relations with the people, the expectations of the Africans.

To use another term, it is within the Catholic and Protestant Churches that Ovimbundu most clearly identify themselves. Baptism identifies an individual by giving him a name, hence Christians object to non-baptized people identifying themselves in this way. To an individual baptism is significant since it is concerned with his destiny. By it also he identifies himself with the 'civilized' population and achieves a new status superior to that of the pagans. The newly-born child of Christian parents will be given a Christian name and also an Umbundu name from one already held by a dead kinsman.[7] A few villagers

[6] Actually responsibility for appointing superiors of missions largely belongs to the superior of the Nova Lisboa district of the Congregação do Espírito Santo.

[7] For Umbundu names, see Elizabeth Eastman, *African Studies* (Johannesburg) March 1943.

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catechist or missionary for support at the post. There is no tendency to confine government appointments to chiefdoms and headmanships to Catholics.[8] However, the Protestant catechists are, unlike the Catholic catechists, not exempt from taxes.[9]

The Ovimbundu no longer possess a coherent political system of their own. They cannot, owing to the nature of their relations with the post and their ignorance of the higher administration, regard the Government as being their representative; the only wide-range systems with which they can identify themselves are the missions. It is through them that the individual is promised eternal life, that the village receives a new type of identity and unity, and that the Ovimbundu as a people participate with the 'civilized' population in ritual communities cutting across the boundaries of culture and geography.

The objection may be made that it is only the Christians who could effectively be represented by the missions and that in Epalanga and Gumba generally baptized Christians formed a minority. It has, however, been previously noted how the school may give its name to a village of mixed population. The catechist will represent both Christians and pagans when he is concerned with the post or with the mission. Moreover, the percentage of pagans in Gumba is far higher than in the rest of Bimbe to which they are linked by the Umbundu language and culture, by administrative divisions, and by a wide range of personal contacts.

It may, then, be asserted, that the catechetical schools and the wider groupings which they build up are the social groups most significant for Umbundu integration on any scale wider than that of the household.

[8] In Gumba the chief and government headman were pagan. There are government-recognised Protestant chiefs elsewhere in Umbundu country.

[9] In some parts of Angola the Catholic catechists are not automatically granted exemption but have to have obtained certain other qualifications, e.g. a certain degree of literacy.

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slave. Once ransomed a boy could not be sold again. If, however, the father was displeased with his son's behaviour he could refuse to ransom him. When a man died, his adolescent sons would go to the household of a classificatory father and the children who did not yet 'have sense' would go with the widow to her kin, returning to their agnatic kin when they were older.

4. *Analysis of the Old Kinship System*

The ethnography of the Ovimbundu does show that there existed a double-descent kinship system, each individual belonging to both a local patrilineal group, and a dispersed matrilineal group, in which movable property is inherited. So great has been the impact of social change that not only have these groups disappeared but it is practically impossible to gain additional information on them by direct questions about their nature and functions. The information on kinship norms does give a somewhat clearer picture.

Within the village there was a very strong emphasis on the unity and solidarity of the men of the village. The men's house was the main social centre of the village where the men ate, received guests, and listened to cases. It was about it rather than about the person of the headman that ritual clustered.[20] The elementary family was not the unit of domestic consumption, and it is clear, from the taboos regarding contact with women kin, and the evidence as to the social life of the man's house that there was little recreational contact between the sexes. The concept of *ondjamba*[21] shows that the elementary family of husband, wife, and children, was morally and ritually significant, but many of the educational, nutritive, and recreational functions frequently associated with it were here attached to the men's house.

The strength of the agnatic ties in this society seems to have lain in the solidarity of the men of the village rather than in the patriarchal authority of fathers over sons. A son was economically independent of his father since he could trade on his own while his father was still living; the most powerful social sanction in the hands of kinsmen, that of being sold as a slave, was

[20] For these rituals see Hastings, pp. 73–76, and Childs, p. 39.
[21] *Ondjamba* will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

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593 604 in the hands of the mother's brother, though the father could, if he wished, intervene; and a man could establish a shrine of his own while his father lived.

613 It is not altogether easy to see how the matrilineal group maintained its cohesion. It was not the working team on which the caravan trade operated since a man's father had first claim on his services, and he could travel with other relatives. Within it alone loans need not be repaid and accusations of sorcery were made; with this in mind, it is evident why, as Dr. Hastings tells us, people tended to avoid the company of their matrikin, [578] and why most disputes arose in the matrilineal groups.[22] It 613 seems that probably the key to the functioning of the matri- 437 lineal groups lies in the details, not now recoverable, of the economy of the caravan trade. As everybody, however successful, was in danger at some time or another of incurring heavy losses,[23] an arrangement by which anybody who was in difficulties could call on his kin for help would be generally acceptable. The association of mutual aid of this sort with matrilineal rather than patrilineal kin would spread losses geographically and would exclude conflicts over currency and movable property from village life. Moreover, the dispersal of the matrilineal kin would provide an individual with business contacts over a considerable area.

5. *Contemporary Kinship Norms*

593 Much of this has disappeared. The men's house is no longer 264 the dining-room of the village male population. Men now often 178 eat with their wives and children though attitudes and practice of this vary between households. People in their twenties knew of the existence of these avoidance rules but it seems that the rules forbidding sons to eat with their mother and eldest sons and daughters to eat with their father are now generally ignored.

[692] [22] Hastings, pp. 18, 87. Disputes within the matrilineal group could be, and very often were, referred to the sub-chief and king. The account of legal proceedings in Hastings (pp. 139–51) suggests that a high proportion of the cases heard by the kings were to do with sorcery. In such cases the social extension of the matrilineal group beyond the area of the sub-chiefdom and the wider political integration achieved by the kingdoms 'co-operated' in preserving a range of social relations beyond the sub-chiefdom.

[23] Apropos of losses Childs quotes Magyar as saying that the Ovimbundu traded for excitement rather than gain (p. 204).

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leaning towards matrilateral rather than patrilateral brothers. The classificatory kinship terminology, and the lack of genealogies and kinship groups, means that a man knows a great many classificatory brothers living in his neighbourhood of whom he vaguely recognizes some as 'close' others as 'distant', but with whom his relations are not especially significant. A boy or girl who loses his or her parents is fairly likely, judging from the evidence of Epalanga households, to settle with a full- or half-brother or sister.

Formerly, owing to virilocal marriage, a sister was geographically separated from her brother, and even if widowed or divorced would not necessarily return to his village, but might go to her mother's brother.[24] With this geographical separation went a situation of possible conflict, since the brother could sell his sister's children to recoup his own debts, and the shadow of sorcery fears seems to have touched this relationship.[25] The suppression of the rubber and slave trades and the subsequent disintegration of the kinship groups have removed the economic pressures which made for conflict between matrilineal kin and the residence rules which divided people locally into groups of agnates and their wives. The brother-sister tie has therefore changed its content, since it is released from the heavy pressures formerly active in the matrilineal kin groups.

It would be wrong to produce any such generalization as 'a woman must always be under the guardianship of a male relative'. A woman who is widowed or divorced or whose husband is away working will tend, however, to develop a particular link with the male head of some household, her own kinsman usually, except in the case of a labour migrant's wife, when it may be a kinsman of her husband. Thus in Epalanga, Augusto (25) aided the household of his absent full brother Julio (29).

Aid is most likely to be given to a kinsman's wife when the two households are close together. The underlying idea seems to be to keep the kinsman's household together rather than any duty of aiding an affine. For a widow or divorced woman or the

[24] Childs, pp. 25–37.

[25] H. W. Nevinson (*A Modern Slavery*) gives a complicated story which suggests this possibility (p. 101).

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KINSHIP

6. *Descent, Inheritance and Succession*

There is little interest in genealogical detail among contemporary Ovimbundu, which is not surprising since there exists no system of descent groups in which the position of the individual may be genealogically defined nor does affiliation to a particular line of descent give status *vis-à-vis* people of less eminent descent. Pedigrees are traced (in either line) for only two to four ascending generations though one man I met could name ancestors for nine ascending generations.

Despite this vagueness and lack of interest in the articulation of relationships, Ovimbundu will say that such-and-such a kinsman is 'close' and such-and-such is 'distant' even though they cannot fit this into a genealogical framework. 'Closeness' and 'nearness' are not simply used to refer to geographical proximity or social co-operation, since there may be much mutual assistance between kinsmen who are 'distant'. One might speak of a blurred edge of kinship not clearly defined in categories of kin but not non-kinsmen. A man may speak of somebody on this 'blurred edge' thus: 'He must be a kinsman but I don't know how.' Similarly the *vakwatjisoko*[1] are a class of people who are not definitely kin, and not non-kin.

There is little formalized distinction between patrikin and matrikin. There is a certain matrilateral pull in the choice of residence, a man being, as has been noted, more likely to settle with a mother's brother than with a 'father'. I had the impression that a man is more likely to settle with a matrilateral 'brother' than with a patrilateral one, but it would be very difficult to establish this by quantitative methods owing to the complexity of the factors affecting residence. As a man tends to settle where he has a number of kin rather than in the shelter of one particular kinsman, this trend does not lead to the formation of matrilineal clusters of kin. The majority of informants still consider that sorcery can only be practised among matrilineal kin but for various reasons it may be said that the fear of sorcery is not significant in kinship relations.[2]

[2] It may be suggested that the disappearance of the matrilineal groups which imposed a co-operation involving exacting demands has been paralleled by the decline of sorcery, the mystical reflection of underlying tensions. How is the fact that several informants told me that sorcery had declined since the days of the

[1] [i.e., funeral friends -- Analyst]

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Inheritance of movable goods was traditionally entirely matrilineal. Today informants are confused as to what ought to be done. Inquiry about particular cases will reveal that often no movable property was left by the deceased, it having been used to pay for such expenses of the illness and funeral as the purchase of medicines and the buying of animals to be slaughtered at the feasts.

Where there is movable property, the transmission of it to the heirs is carried out in a rather informalized way, as so often happens in Umbundu social activities. The actual division of property is undertaken by a kinsman of the deceased. This should apparently be the most senior kinsman. It may be a cross-cousin or 'brother' or a sister's son.[29] How it is decided who is the senior kinsman, and who are fitted to participate in the share-out is not very clear. Nor does it seem that there is any effective device against the sharer-out giving himself the lion's share, except the general pressures and reciprocities of kinship. The principle accepted in the share-out is that inheritance should be a reflection of the relations which existed with the dead man, and also be a reward of funeral services. Nothing is kept for kin who are away working, and a son who did not keep in contact with his father would be omitted from the share-out.

By inheritance a man can increase his small stock of possessions. He is unlikely to receive anything much in the way of money, and since there is no land shortage, and, as yet, little in the way of valuable immovable property such as brick

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rubber trade to be reconciled with the statement by Childs that fear of sorcery was increasing (Childs pp. 57–58)? I suggest that the final disintegration of the old kinship groups may have been marked by particularly sharp social tensions, but that once these groups were in fact dissolved and a new form of social relations established the fear of sorcery may have declined. It should also be remembered that as indicated in Chapter V the present-day economic values of the Ovimbundu do not lead to expectations that a prosperous individual will share his wealth with poorer kinsmen, as was the case in the time of the rubber trade. Hence accusations of sorcery based on disappointed expectations of generosity are unlikely to arise.

Another aspect of the question which cannot be explored here in detail is the lack of agreement on the causality of classes of happenings or individual events. Thus one informant will say that a woman's pains in childbirth are due to sorcerers among her kin, another will say that they are caused by God (as we would say, are natural).

[29] Hambly, pp. 199–200.

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602 183 the same time clearly an important part of social life. Kinship norms are confused, as is the correct term to use in a particular relationship. Ritual and jural sanctions are lacking, as are institutions based on the regular co-operation of groups of kinsmen. Yet a man likes to live with kinsfolk and there is a tendency for kin to cluster together in a neighbourhood.

602 621 By the very facts, that so many of a man's neighbours are his kinsmen, and that there is very little marked differentiation between the behaviour towards different categories of kin, kinship is robbed of any great specificity of content. It might be said that it is the quantity rather than the quality of kinship ties that makes kinship significant in establishing a 'sense of community' in a neighbourhood, in that the multiplicity of local kin ties creates some identification between a man's range of kin and his neighbourhood. At the same time a kinship tie provides a basis on which a closer relationship may be built by reciprocal services. It appears that the inheritance of property 602 428 recognizes kinship in this way by recognizing claims not on the basis of strict genealogical proximity but on the quality of the relationship.

128 A discussion of marriage and the household must be left to the next chapter. The outline given of the present kinship system is sufficiently clear to begin an examination of the reasons for the changes. This must rely to some extent on speculation, owing to a lack of information on the actual working of the kinship system while it was in transition to its present form.

613 178 The key change is the disappearance of the kinship groups. These, it seems, disappeared because of their high degree of dependence on the particular type of economy existing before 1911. It has already been argued that the distinction between the patrikin and the matrikin is an attempt to isolate economic claims and conflicts from village and political relationships, and that the giving of loans without right of repayment within the matrikin was called for by a trading system in which credit played an important part. With the end of the trade the wealth passing through Umbundu hands declined sharply, and there was neither need for funds to meet trading losses nor currency to provide them. A man obtained money either by growing crops

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helped by his wife and children or by going out to work. Neither means of making money involves regular co-operation with a body of kinsmen. The occasional co-operation needed in situations of financial crisis or mutual help for some particular job can be provided by those of a man's numerous kinsfolk with whom he has established ties of amity above the mere recognition of relationship.[32]

The disappearance of the matrilineal group was a logical consequence of the disappearance of its *raison d'être*. With the disappearance of the matrilineal group, there was no longer any need to preserve the distinctive nature of the agnatic group. It is quite possible to suppose that the village might have preserved its patrilineal base if other factors had come into play. Such possible factors would be a shortage of land, danger of attack from enemies, or the use by the headman of his political power to keep control over his patrikin.[33]

A question of some significance arises from the differences of attitude to a man's 'fathers' and to his 'mother's brothers' which has been noted earlier on. From the literature it might seem that the link between agnates was very strong, and that it is surprising that it should have broken up so completely. It may be suggested that the unity of agnatic kin was expressed in the idiom of relations between villagers rather than of relations between kin, and that within the village there was not necessarily much greater solidarity between siblings than between distant agnates. The solidarity of paternal siblings was then, granting this hypothesis, a reflection of the wider solidarity of the village. When the village disintegrated the close ties between brothers disintegrated also.

The unity of the matrikin was perhaps expressed to a much greater degree in a kinship idiom.[34] This is perhaps one of the

[32] The amount of aid an individual can mobilize in case of need depends to a very great extent on personal factors. It should be emphasised that it is personal co-operation over a number of years rather than any genealogical nearness that inclines a man to be helpful. While helpfulness to kinsfolk is a norm of Umbundu ethics, it is possible in practice to provide excuses for non-co-operation.

[33] The rapid disintegration of the indigenous system of authority after the middle thirties may reasonably be linked with the decay of agnatic ties of residence.

[34] 'When an Ocimbundu speaks of his family (epata) in the sense of a large and widespread organization with a recognised head in some elder, it is generally his elders to which he refers.' Childs, p. 44.

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reasons behind the 'neo-matrilineal' pull in residence, the other being the new relationship between brother and sister, with its consequent influence on the mother's brother—sister's son relationship.

In this chapter on the kinship system the preferential marriages have not been discussed at length, but without them the contemporary kinship system would not tie up as it does with the local organization. The next chapter complements this one.

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582 husband. Another explanation is that this is a northern practice which has spread into Gumba.[9]

584 A young man who wishes to marry approaches the girl of his choice and asks her to marry him. He then asks her parents for their permission. The consent of both partners and of their parents is required now as in the past, though parental consent may often be evaded by running off to the towns and getting married there. After that negotiations are conducted with a senior kinsman as intermediary. Before the marriage can take

583 place, bridewealth must be paid over. It is this that gives the right to claim damages for adultery. When asked why bridewealth is paid, informants are likely to say that it compensates the father for the expense of the bringing up of his daughter.

L178 The amount of bridewealth paid has been rising. Two informants said that four yards (metres) of cloth and a bottle of rum formed the bridewealth in the time of the rubber trade. Others suggested as the bridewealth of that period a hoe and a few sleeping-mats. Alternatively seashells or even Portuguese coins, which were not then used in transactions among the Ovimbundu, were employed. These bridewealth objects were obtained from outside Umbundu country and had a certain rarity value, unlike the other objects which were very common. In the early thirties Hastings also mentioned the bridewealth as consisting of four yards of cloth, a bottle of rum, plus a kerchief given to her father's sister.[10] Money seems to have come in as a regular part of bridewealth about 1940.

When Cypriano married in 1949 Rosa, a sister's daughter, he paid 200 escudos (about £2. 10s.), a black cloth to her mother, and a small pig to her father. When Pedro Epalanga Chimbalanya married, near the Bimbe mission, in 1953 he paid 400 escudos, one cloth of six metres, a head cloth, a woman's blouse, and a bottle of rum. When in 1956 Daniel married Feliciana, a sister's daughter of Ndjoleya and his cross-cousin, he paid 400 escudos, whereas when Jose the son of Paulo married in the same year he paid 300 escudos also for a cross-cousin.

The bridewealth should be paid to the father. If however, a

[9] Explanation given by Padre Pelão.
[10] Hastings, p. 39.

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for the bride's village. Here they may be greeted with formal speeches of welcome in Portuguese, a usage copied from the reception of missionaries. 585

One only turns up to a wedding if one has been invited, and not everybody who is a kinsman living in the neighbourhood is invited. Nor is there any marked distinction between kin and non-kin in the ceremony, except for the ending of avoidances and the recognition of the father's sister, who is recompensed for her services as nursemaid. Village membership is significantly recognized in the distribution of food, and the sending of the party to the bride's home to represent the bridegroom's village.

Umbundu marriage is virilocal, although a certain number of marriages are within the village. Apart from such marriages, it seems to be rare to find a man settling in a village because his wife has kin there. 591

Although during the early months of the marriage the bridegroom's mother may supervise the bride's work, the individual household is essentially an independent unit[13] and was not even in the past merged with other household units to form a 'grandfamily'. This independence is not isolation. I have only a very few times seen houses with any sort of compound about them. Much of domestic life, eating, working, resting, talking, may be done out of doors in front of the house. Paying visits is a great feature of village life especially when the day's work is over, although there is also a term *ola panda*, to visit in the morning, referring to what are usually just short calls, involving the exchange of greetings. Perhaps the opportunity of calling and being called on is one of the factors maintaining the village as a social unit. The idea that a man should not eat with his wife still survives to some extent so that questions on this topic receive contradictory answers. Observation shows that even among the men who travelled on the caravans, eating with one's wife is the general practice. 592 574 284

One of the most striking features of Umbundu domestic life is the close companionship which exists between husband and wife and which is unquestionably a modern development.[14] 593 178

[13] See Magyar, pp. 281–5.

[14] The role of the *Ongange* as described by Childs and Hastings indicates that a man's normal companions both for eating and recreation were other men.

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Going round the houses at night one meets in one house a man and his wife sitting together talking, in another a group of men and women sitting round a fire. This is a very definite change from traditional pattern of social life in which men and women sat in separate groups, a pattern which is still observed at funerals.[10] A man who has a case at the post is likely to take with him his wife as a witness. A husband has the right to beat his wife, and she should show respect to him. In fact wife-beating is rare, and the relationship seems from observation to be often one of mutual affection and close companionship. Informants were divided as to whether one can joke with one's wife—some people may fear that she will cease to respect her husband if he jokes with her—but conversationally an Umbundu wife often seems to enjoy an easy familiarity with her husband. A wife may occasionally go and stay with her relatives, and in the neighbourhood she may pay calls on kinsfolk, friends, or co-villagers, without her husband. This contrasts with the way the white and mulatto wives of traders follow the custom of rural Portugal by staying more or less permanently in the house.

The wife has her own fields, and her own granary. If the marriage is polygamous, each wife has her field and granary. Her husband may help her in her fields, although he also has fields of his own. The maize in the husband's granary is sold to produce money to pay tax and to buy clothing for both husband and wife, and the maize in the wife's granary is used for food. If her husband is away a woman will buy her clothes from her own granary. The cooking of maize has not only a nutritive importance but also a social one since it is considered the service, which is specifically wifely. Thus, the explanation I was given for the lower age of marriage emphasizes this—I should explain that people returning from contract labour are sent first to the post at which they were recruited and may have to do an additional fortnight's work there. 'It is because of the hardship.[11] In the past one married only when one was fully grown. Now it is necessary to have somebody who will send food to the post when you come back.' 'Perhaps,' I suggested, 'your mother

[10] Childs, pp. 32, 33.
[11] Ohali, a word often used with regard to administrative demands.

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ended by her death, and can rely on her testimony in a case. Even though adultery is reputedly frequent it is deplored and, as will be shown in a discussion of disputes, a man's hostility to another will be ascribed to thwarted lust for the latter's wife. The conjugal bond is the closest social relation that can exist between adults, and therefore the very type of personal enmity is provided by the adulterer or would-be adulterer.

I am here emphasizing the factors which strengthen the conjugal bond; at the end of the previous chapter I emphasized the strength which the brother-sister tie possessed under changed conditions. The balance between these two ties is to be seen in the way in which a man and his wife's brother are often next door neighbours and the best of friends. It may be suggested that this balance reflects the part-peasant part-proletarian condition of the Ovimbundu, the emergence of the conjugal family with its importance as the working team for the cultivation of cash crops, and the 'reshaping of' the brother-sister tie with the absence of husbands as labourers. It seems probable from the example of the substantial coffee-growers that had the Ovimbundu become full-time cultivators there would have been a strong trend towards isolated households and the weakening of the 'neo-matrilineal' pull which operates in the villages.

It is then the marriage tie which holds the vague, amorphous, kinship system together; it is against this vagueness that the marriage bond appears as the closest and most definite relation that can exist between two adults; and the change-over from trade to an economy based on wage-labour and cash agriculture has been accompanied by a transition from a double-descent kinship system to one in which the emergence of the elementary family co-exists with a certain pull towards matrilineal kin.

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CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL CONTROL

1. *Introduction*

In this chapter I shall describe and analyse three disputes which reveal the working of social control in present-day Umbundu society. The first dispute is between an elder of the school and a government headman, the second is between a traditional headman and a villager with the intervention of a local self-styled *assimilado*[1], and the third arose from a quarrel between an irregularly installed chief and a traditional headman.

The points which it is hoped will arise from the analysis of the material are the disappearance or extreme weakness of the traditional institutions of social control, the way in which the Ovimbundu appeal to the members of the 'civilized' community for decisions or support in cases, and how kinship ties affect the relations between persons involved in a dispute.

2. *Guilherme and Paulo*

The parties principally involved in the first dispute were Paulo (24. See List of Epalanga residents), the elder of the school at Epalanga, and his cross-cousin Guilherme (see List II, p. 55), a government headman then living in Epalanga, Francisco, a son of the former chief Mbati and wife's brother to Paulo, and Sapapula (10), the headman and reputed founder of Epalanga. The sequence of the dispute is first a quarrel between Paulo and Guilherme. Guilherme then attacks Paulo through his wife's brother Francisco. This brings about a general attack

[1] The fact that Justino was not actually an assimilado is not relevant, since he used the belief of the local people that he was.

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like his accusation that Sapapula had incited Jaime to kill him, an attempt to portray himself not as an ungrateful recipient of Sapapula's goodness but a much suffering victim of his malevolence.

Although the moot reflects the existing social structure and values there are occasional reminiscences of the former social system. Thus Ngombe seems to have been acting according to a traditional but non-effective pattern in giving a long, judicial, summing up, which had no practical effect. Again, when Sapapula accused Kapapelo of wishing to break up the village it is probable that he was thinking of the old villages socially defined by the agnatic tie and physically enclosed by a stockade rather than the physically and socially amorphous villages of the present day. Values such as these survive in the minds of individuals when the associated social forms have disintegrated. They are brought out on occasions analogous to those in which they were formerly used, but are not nowadays decisive in the way they would have been.

The quarrel between Kapapelo and Sapapula is different from the other cases, since the meeting held to discuss it is held without the presence of a 'civilized' person and it pivots about a question of adultery or rather attempted adultery, a subject which has hitherto appeared marginally as a subject for insults. The case is held without the presence of a 'civilized' person, and this is from necessity, not from choice. Sapapula had tried to have the case heard by Justino, and Kapapelo was eventually brought to terms by Sapapula's threat to refer the matter to the post. While the moot shows us the community acting to uphold social control, such action is regarded as an unsatisfactory substitute for a decision by somebody who could, as Gonçalve said of Antonio Pires, 'leave with the words', that is, settle the case.

Adultery has previously occurred as an accusation thrown in during a squabble that has begun with something else. Thus Guilherme accused Paulo and Wasuka accused Kapapelo of adultery because they were angry with them; they were not angry with them because they thought they had committed adultery with their wives. It is parallel to the suggestions that Kapapelo was a sorcerer, an insult not an accusation. It now

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mission to give Sapapula's case, and, as things worked out, it was the anthropologist who was made the 'civilized' focus for the opposition to Lusase as Antonio Pires had been made the focus of the opposition to Guilherme. Lusase, like Guilherme, reacted by saying that he owed allegiance only to the *chefe do posto*, and running off to the post.

Luanga's case shows how desire to get out of contract labour may give a new reason for taking a ministerial title, and also once again how sending someone to contract labour is regarded as a means of injuring those whom one dislikes.

I have spoken of the conflict between Lusase and Sapapula as being a conflict between a chief and his people, and this is true in so far as it shows how opposition forms against a chief and how he can be checked. It is therefore of importance as indicating the position of the chief in the contemporary social system. The people themselves interpreted the dispute as being essentially one between individuals—Lusase's behaviour was attributed to his lust for Naboka, and Gregorio entered the dispute not as the ruler of the neighbouring chiefdom of Menga but as a friend of Sapapula. The interpretation of what is a political conflict as a quarrel between individuals may be explained as being due to the relatively limited nature of the role of chief (Lusase) and of traditional headman (Sapapula) which therefore do not predominate in the social status of the individual. (In this particular case, had I got Lusase's viewpoint he would probably have said that he was defending his dignity as chief, whereas Sapapula did not regard Lusase as being really chief.) The lack of a formal court system or even of an articulated political system at the local level has brought into desuetude the old legal and political idioms and the Ovimbundu have not yet learnt new terms from the Portuguese.

3. *Social Control and Social Structure in the Dispute*

I now return to the points mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. It is hardly necessary to underline the decayed state of the traditional system of authority. Lusase had, at the time of the quarrel between Guilherme and Paulo, expressed his

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intention of staying out of the dispute, just in the same way as he said, when Ndonga's action was reported to him, that he did not know what went on in the villages. That is, Lusase disclaimed any general responsibility for maintaining law and order in the sub-chiefdom. He had turned up at the case before Justino and at the moot by Kapapelo's house, when Nahoka had pointed out that it was he, and not Kafelo, who was effectively chief. The very fact that such a remark could be made indicates a weakness in Lusase's position, and his lack of authority is further illustrated by his being but one of a crowd of would-be conciliators.

It was, indeed, Lusase's position with relation to Kafelo that brought about his quarrel with Sapapula. Lusase, on meeting Kafelo at Kapapelo's, had bowed to him, and must have been uneasily aware that public opinion held that Kafelo 'had finished', had completed the cycle of chiefly rites, whereas Lusase was just 'the *chefe de poste's* boy'. It is unlikely that there would be among the Ovimbundu developed forms of the situation reported from some colonial areas by which one person acts as chief or headman *vis-à-vis* the government while another is the real chief or headman with effective power over the people, if only because so much of the content of chieftancy today is simply post work. Yet a chief differs from a government headman precisely because of the surviving prestige which clings to the capital village, the skulls of the dead chiefs, the titled ministers, and the drums, and it was such an expression of prestige which Sapapula gave to Kafelo and denied to Lusase. Not surprisingly Lusase reacted to this sharp evidence of the weakness of his position. In acting as he did, he made things worse; since he lacked any local means of imposing his will by force, or mobilizing moral support, he had to fall back on the post.

This weakening of the chieftancy is, of course, only part of the general disintegration of the old social system. Sapapula, in personality and prestige, was the equal of any traditional headman in the neighbourhood, and was consulted by the chief and government headmen when fines or roadworkers were required from Epalanga. Yet it was Paulo and not Sapapula who launched the attack on Guilherme, an attack speedily supported

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by other villagers. Nor does residence in a village or sub-chiefdom compel or limit participation in a dispute. Neither Ndjoleya nor any of his kin participated in the dispute between Paulo and Guilherme. Gregorio came from Menga to support his friend Sapapula against Lusase, acting as a private individual, and not as the chief of Menga intervening in the internal politics of a neighbouring sub-chiefdom.

The social institutions participated in exclusively by Ovimbundu (i.e. the system of kinship and marriage and the local organization) do not provide machinery for resolving disputes. Therefore, binding decisions must be obtained from a representative of the 'civilized' society, and much importance attaches to setting out the details of the case in such a way as to gain the interest of this representative. It would seem likely from this that all cases will pass into the hands of the *chefe*, and that those 'natives' who are most closely linked to the post—the chief and the government headmen—will therefore be the most influential people in indigenous society. In fact, as the disputes show, this does not happen. Cases are taken to other 'civilized' persons—the priest Antonio Pires and the *ex-aluno assimilado* Justino—and Lusase, instead of making up on the bureaucratic roundabouts what he has lost on the traditional swings, falls heavily off both.

The willingness of villagers to submit their cases to Justino and the mission rather than to the post is a result of the much closer personal contact which exists with them, and their lack of direct punitive sanctions. Any case referred to the *chefe* is thought liable to produce uncertain consequences. It was because of this that the people of Gumba did not dare to complain to the post about Lusase's usurpation; for this reason, too, Guilherme, knowing the *chefe* trusted him no more than any other native, sought reconciliation before getting to the post. The chief and government headmen neither enjoy official confidence nor control access to the post.

On the level of the total Angolan society the State is obviously more powerful than the Church. On the local level the chief and government headmen have more executive power[2]

[2] The capacity to give orders backed by force; but this only applies to orders received from the post.

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on good terms with Guilherme, who was a 'father' of his, and even earlier in June part of the celebrations which marked the marriage of Paulo's son Jose to Pungu, a girl from Namba, whose mother had at one time been married to Kapapelo, took place at the latter's house. Most strikingly of all, as has been noted, Guilherme could borrow money from Bartolomeu and Paulo at the height of their quarrel. The kinship bond exists outside of and, it might be said, at a deeper level than, the quarrel, and the rebukes hurled at an adversary reflect this. Paulo did not complain that Guilherme was a bad cross-cousin; instead he complained that Guilherme was not grateful to him for having baptized his dying child. The motive for co-operation or conflict in everyday life is to be found not in the tracing of genealogies but in the tally of reciprocal services and grievances between two individuals.

It may be claimed that this portrait of the kinship system which emerges from the disputes as being loosely structured and lacking defined obligations, but providing an underlying continuity, is very similar to that given in Chapter VII, which was based on questioning and the observation of everyday life.

The significance of the conjugal bond appears both positively in the way Luanga and Sapapula both take their wives to the post as witnesses, and negatively in the way the hostility of Kapapelo and Lusase to Sapapula is interpreted as being inspired by lust for his wife. Even the accusations of adultery so readily hurled about in disputes reflect the stereotype of the adulterer as the arch-enemy, and likewise the arch-enemy of the moment as at least a potential adulterer.

One question remains to be answered. Was Epalanga a particularly rebellious, squabbling, divided, village, because of the presence of an unusual number of aggressive individuals? It is not possible to estimate the number of disputes per village, and the disputes which have been described were the most important of which I had personal knowledge. They were touched off by personal antagonisms rather than by structural contradictions. Yet they tie in with what has been said of the Umbundu social structure in earlier chapters to such a degree that they seem to reflect the lines along which any case of the sort would proceed. The weakness of the chiefs, stripped of

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traditional sanctions and lacking official confidences, the powerless prestige of the traditional headman, the lack of defined village unity, the role of the catechetical school and its officials, who have come to represent the village as a whole, the loosely structured yet stabilizing kinship system, all described in earlier chapters, have re-emerged as parts of a reasonably effective system of social control within which people quarrel and by which their quarrels are settled. It is possible for the villagers by appealing to patrons to check tyrannical behaviour on the part of chief and headmen and to get a fair hearing at the post. Within the local community disputants, once their anger has blown over, may be reunited by the ties of kinship and affinity.

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CONCLUSIONS

The phrase 'A Study of Social Control and Social Change among the Ovimbundu' implies an analysis of the working of the social maintenance mechanism in a period of social change. The concept appears almost paradoxical since it seems that effective maintenance machinery[1] would prevent social change, and rapid social change is often associated by anthropologists with a situation of individual and social demoralization and disintegration.[2] At the present time the Ovimbundu of the area where fieldwork was done have undergone very rapid social change and have a reasonably effective system of social control, which, however, differs considerably from the traditional system. To confirm these statements, I briefly summarize the material provided in previous chapters.

In the time of the rubber trade (1874–1911) there existed a number of Umbundu kingdoms. The king, assisted and checked, as elsewhere in Africa by titled ministers, was responsible for external relations, undertook certain rituals, and provided a supreme court of appeal where trials were conducted by set rules of procedure. The real unit of law, as regards Gumba at least, seems to have been the sub-chiefdom, with its few thousand inhabitants, governed by a chief who like the king had to administer justice together with his councillors.

This body of councillors included the village headmen who were the heads of bodies of agnatic kin. They had general legal and political responsibility for the village. While the disputes arising in village relations were kept within the patrilineal kin group, the problems arising from the inheritance of movable goods and particularly from the highly important caravan trade were dealt with in the matrilineal group. Owing to the dispersed nature of this group and to its commercial preoccupations the sanctions operating within it must have differed somewhat from those found at the chief's court or village men's

[1] For this term see S. F. Nadel, *Theory of Social Structure*, London, 1957, p. 35.
[2] e.g. G. and M. Wilson, *Analysis of Social Change*, Cambridge, 1945.

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house. Wealthy members who did not assist their kin were liable to be accused of sorcery. A mother's brother had the right to sell his sister's son as punishment for the latter's misconduct or to pay his own debts, a sanction counterbalancing the rights of the poorer matrilineal kin to receive loans without the obligation of repayment. As the matrilineal groups existed apparently across sub-chiefdom boundaries they formed a means of social control in those trading activities which provided the major focus of Umbundu interests and which flowed over the boundaries of the political groupings whose smallest unit was the patrilineally based village.

The disappearance of the matrilineal kin groups must be associated with the collapse of the old economy, and to judge from my difficulty in getting information about them their disintegration must have come about fairly rapidly after the end of the trade. Authority within the sub-chiefdom and village remained at a level fairly near the traditional norm till about 1935. After that social change has rapidly dissolved most of the traditional institutions.

The existing system of social control depends on political, local, and kinship systems very different from those previously operative. Cases are very often taken to the post without being previously taken to the chief. The latter's position is a combination of executive of the orders of the post (a role he shares with the government headman) with the surviving prestige represented by the skulls of his predecessors and the ministerial titles allocated to his kinsmen and associates. While the chief and government headmen may settle minor cases, they do not operate any system of courts by which disputes can be regularly and satisfactorily settled.

Judicial power has been effectively transferred from the indigenous society to the 'civilized' community and for a dispute to be brought to a settlement a decision must be obtained from some 'civilized' person or a negotiated arrangement may be made under threat of referring the matter to the post. Considerable importance therefore attaches to the mobilization of ties with some 'civilized' person who may be an employer but is most frequently the mission, which to some degree acts as a patron for all natives. Hence the local

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representatives of the mission, the catechist and elder of the school, tend to become the guardians of the public interest against arrogance on the part of the chief and government headmen.

In the conflict between the local representatives of the post and of the mission the latter are likely, if they have a good case, to win since they have a closer link with the mission than the chief and government headmen have with the post. While the policy of the administration of dissolving the indigenous political system has been highly successful it has not created new bureaucratic institutions at the local level, and the chief and government headmen have just sufficient power to do what the post tells them to do. The traditional headmen, while they still act as focuses of kin ties in a village have prestige rather than power; a prestige, however, sufficient to rally considerable support for them in a dispute. The catechetical school and its officials, represent the village to the outside world and provide what is nowadays the only institutional grouping on a village basis.

The role of the missions in social control is threefold; the establishment of new social groupings and forms of leadership at village level, the decision of disputes and the influencing of the *chefe's* decisions, and the giving of a feeling of approximation to the 'civilized' population. It is the missions rather than the chiefs and headmen who provide the main social bridges between the 'civilized' and native populations, since both groups participate in their institutions and values.[3]

The kinship system, whose operation must form an important part of any system of social control, has also undergone very great changes. The old kinship groups have disappeared, and the system is now cognatic, with little distinction between patrilateral and matrilateral kin although there is a certain matrilineal pull in choice of residence. Kinship norms have

[3] This does not deny the importance of the administration and the economy in linking the 'civilized' and natives together; yet this administrative and economic integration does not provide the sense of community which to a limited degree is given through the missions, which also provide the only opportunity for individual natives to have influence in a social sphere beyond the range of kin and neighbours; in the Catholic missions by the provision of an influential patron, in the Protestant Native Church by participation in Church councils and courts.

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105 178 become confused and vague; the existence of a kinship tie provides an opportunity to build a social relation rather than a jural obligation to fulfil certain duties. With the disappearance of the commensality which marked the patrilineal kin, and the economic co-operation characteristic of the matrilineal groups, the elementary family has emerged as the primary domestic and economic grouping.

In this rather amorphous system, coherence is given by the marriage tie. The very high rate of preferential marriages creates a great number of affinal (and subsequently kinship) ties within a limited area, and it seems to be from this that the neighbourhood community derives its cohesion. At the level of the individual marriage (as opposed to that of the total structure) the relation between husband and wife is a very close one, with, conversely, the relation between a man and his wife's lover being the archetype of hostility.

It is now necessary to see how the description of the two systems of social control relate to the problems of the social changes which have intervened to turn into the other. Obviously social change has been very great. It is not perhaps possible to point to any one factor responsible for the speed of the process. The old political system would not have disintegrated if the administration had used it as the intermediary between it and the natives. However, the hostility of the administration to the chiefs has not succeeded in all parts of Angola in breaking down traditional authority.[4]

Economic change has certainly affected very considerably the social structure. In other parts of Africa a cash economy gained by selling crops and working for wages has replaced a subsistence economy where exchanges were made by barter and gift exchanges. The Ovimbundu were experienced traders used to a currency and with a business-like, rather grasping outlook.[5] Through the matrilineal groups this commercial activity was fitted into the kinship system. The disappearance of the trade brought a sharp fall in the Umbundu standard of living and destroyed the need for developed credit facilities. Instead of the

[4] Among the Ngangela of the area round Vila Artur de Paiva the chiefs retain their authority.

[5] See Serpa Pinto, pp. 169–71 and F. S. Arnot, *Garenganze*, London, 1889, p. 116.

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gaining of wealth by means involving extensive economic co-operation among the Ovimbundu themselves, money was earned in an individual relation to a particular European whether planter or trader.

It must be recognized that the relation between economic change and the continuation or disintegration of kinship groups is a yet unsolved problem of anthropology,[6] particularly as it is seldom possible to isolate the economic pressure. I emphasize the readiness of the Ovimbundu for change, their willing acceptance of the role of clients to the whites.[7] It may be suggested that this attitude was established in the period of the trade when the Ovimbundu were ultimately dependent on the whites for trade goods and that this attitude of imitation and receptivity lies behind the disappearance of so much of the old social structure and the lack of any myth of, or even interest in, the past.[8]

I have claimed that the present system of social control is effective.[9] This may be granted empirically for the reasons already given, the absence of serious crime or prolonged conflict involving the whole community, the effective checks on the functionaries of the post, and the failure of squabbles to tear the network of kin and affinal ties. If a working social system is a proof of an integrated society, then contemporary Umbundu society qualifies for this description. This is not the only possible way of looking at it. It may be claimed that under present circumstances the Ovimbundu are no longer integrated by their tribal system but are held together by the Angolan

[6] For various comments on this problem see A. I. Richards, in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, p. 251, M. Fortes, 'Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups', in *American Anthropologist*, Feb. 1953, M. Douglas (review of Mitchell's *The Yao Village*) in *Africa*, July 1957.

[7] Cf. the Ngangela name for the Ovimbundu, the Ovimbali, a term traditionally applied to Africans living in close contact with the whites. The Ovimbundu accept this stereotype.

[8] 'A lack of history is correlated with the amorphous character of the society.' E. Colson in Colson and Gluckman (ed.) *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa*, Oxford, 1951, p. 100.

[9] Other quarrels of which I heard while in Epalanga: a messenger from the mission sent to intervene in a marriage dispute was attacked; the chief of Chicunda summoned to the mission for a telling-off after beating up one of his people; a man from Gumba refusing to go to a funeral in Cassongue of a man whose death he was thought to have caused by sorcery.

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Government,[10] which has deprived them of all legal and political autonomy. The present Umbundu social system deprived of any form of public life ticks over, as a man who has been paralysed may continue to live. The cultural barriers and structural gulf between the post, the basic unit of the administration, and the people, are to a certain extent bridged by the mission. This task throws a considerable strain on the organizations set up by the missions, to which they are far from equal.[11] The common values shared by 'civilized' and native, whose introduction was ascribed to the missions, give the Ovimbundu psychological compensation rather than a genuine participation in the culture of the ruling group. The stability which marks social relations in the area is passivity rather than integration.

The most truthful approach would seem to be a synthesis of the two arguments. The disintegration of the old legal and political institutions and the attitude of dependence and passivity towards Europeans cohere with a stability provided by the pattern of kin and affinal ties and the continuity of local relations. It has been argued that the range of marriages (and hence the range of kinship ties) has not noticeably expanded in recent years, and that the links which orient Gumba to the north and west rather than to the south and east date back to the nineteenth century. Such other factors as the poor local communications, the limited economic development of the area, and the absence of resident whites in Gumba may also have helped to preserve the continuity and security of the 'private' life of individuals.[12] In other areas of Umbundu country, especially near the railway line, where communications are easy, Europeans and *assimilados* are numerous, and there are more marked differences of wealth, this 'coherence' of change and continuity may have very much less empirical efficiency.

In one part of Umbundu country in 1955, a contra-acculturá-

[10] Putting it another way; there is no Umbundu political system, and hence the nearest approach to Umbundu politics are the squabbles of Chapter IX.

[11] The missionaries complain of the poor calibre of many catechists, and the catechists complain of the lack of obedience of their people.

[12] The relations between two individuals may remain friendly, even though the form of their relations changes.

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In one part of Umbundu country in 1955, a contra-acculturative movement arose which combined features found in cargo-cults and anti-witchcraft campaigns,[13] social activities usually regarded as products of a malaise in the relations between Europeans and an indigenous society.[14] The Ovimbundu whom I knew were not ready to take the initiative in their dealings with the 'civilized' population; but it would be wrong to regard the system of social control that I have tried to describe as being true for much more than a very small area of Umbundu country and a very limited extent of time.

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[13] The movement began at Bela Vista on the railway line and spread over south-eastern Umbundu country into the Ngangela area. Its leaders were men and women who called themselves saints and claimed to have died and come to life again. They announced that all sorcery would cease, and those who continued it would die in an unusual way. They forbade the wearing of black clothes and ordered the killing of black livestock (fowls and pigs). They also forbade the growing of maize for sale. It was stated that rain would come from heaven to kill the whites (according to some accounts only the bad whites) and the blacks would then have their goods. This movement was spread through the catechetical schools. It was eventually repressed by administrative action. Private information. Also article in *O Apostolado*, Luanda, Oct. 27, 1956.

[14] See A. I. Richards, 'A Modern Movement of Witchfinders', *Africa*, Oct. 1935.